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New York

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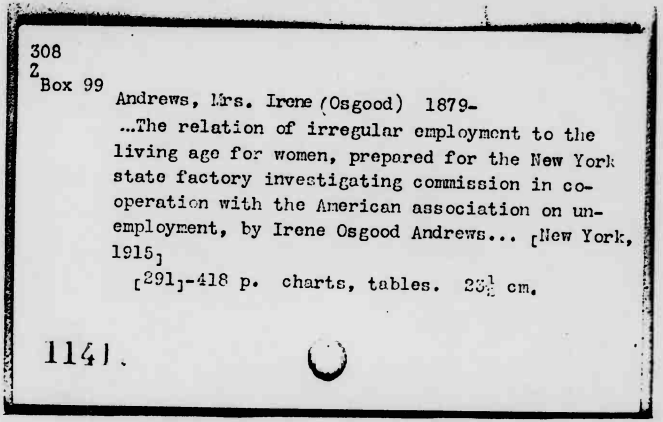

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THE RELATION OF IRREGULAR EMPLOYMENT

TO THE

LIVING WAGE FOR WOMEN

IRENE OSGOOD ANDREWS
Assistant Secretary, American Association for Labor Legislation

Prepared for the
NEW YORK STATE FACTORY INVESTIGATING COMMISSION
In Cooperation with the
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON UNEMPLOYMENT
131 East 23rd Street, New York City
June, 1915

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III

THE RELATION OF IRREGULAR EMPLOYMENT TO THE LIVING WAGE FOR WOMEN

Prepared for the

NEW YORK STATE FACTORY INVESTIGATING COMMISSION

In Cooperation with the

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON UNEMPLOYMENT

By

IRENE OSGOOD ANDREWS, *Assistant Secretary*
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR LABOR LEGISLATION

Ab Feb 16, 1923.

PREFACE

Two of the big distinct movements which have recently emerged from the heterogeneous strivings for social justice of the past five years in America are centered about the problems of unemployment and the minimum wage. This report is an attempt in a small way to bridge the gap between the two movements and to show the relation of one to the other in so far as they are concerned with women in industry.

In this investigation, as in many others, material of value was at hand in voluminous printed reports. But the bits of information on the particular topic under consideration were scattered and elusive. By bringing together in convenient form the main existing facts and by analyzing them for purposes of comparison, their true significance is brought out. The analysis of conditions has been confined mainly to irregular employment over a yearly period; no comparisons for long periods of time have been attempted in this report.

The three main sources from which the greater part of the material for this report has been ferreted out are the searching investigations made during the past few years by the United States Bureau of Labor, the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, and the Factory Investigating Commission of New York State. For the painstaking examination of these and numerous scattering articles and reports cordial acknowledgment is here made to Miss Margarett Hobbs who has assisted at every step in the preparation of this report.

I. O. A.

THE RELATION OF IRREGULAR EMPLOYMENT TO THE LIVING WAGE FOR WOMEN

I. INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

Statement of the Problem

In the discussion of the legal minimum wage for women, provided for by nine states in 1912 and 1913, practically all of the emphasis thus far has been placed upon only one of the two essential factors, namely the *rate of pay*. Almost no attention has been given to the other equally important factor, namely the *regularity of employment*. Both factors must be taken into consideration if the working woman is to receive a "living wage."

All minimum wage rates so far established in this country have been weekly rates based upon the necessary cost of living per week. Such wage awards therefore really set rates per hour. In effect they say, "You may have a living wage for each hour you work, but if you have no work you must get along the best you can." For the awards make no allowance for short time employment. To establish rates which will take unemployment into account is admittedly a difficult problem. But in at least one country this need has been recognized and effectively dealt with.

Mr. Justice Higgins of the Australian Commonwealth Arbitration Court recently had before him a case involving a minimum wage for dock and wharf laborers. He refused to consider the loosely made statements concerning weekly wages and took as his basis for discussion annual earnings. The Justice said "The vital facts of the position are that the work is casual and uncertain, that jobs are short and that the necessities of the man and his dependents are certain, continuous and incessant. There is nearly every day a surplus of men seeking employment at most wharves. * * * It is lamentable that so many lusty men, in the prime of life, should have to stand about idle wait-

ing for jobs. The frequent bouts of idleness must often lead to bad habits, and to loss of muscular condition. There is a tremendous waste of potential human energy involved. The men serve the public by waiting for ships, and they are entitled at least to food, clothes, and shelter for themselves and dependents during the whole time of this service. If people expect cabmen to be ready for a call on the stand, they must pay an extra rate to cover the time lost in waiting. It would be absurd to say, as has been urged here, that the obligation of the master ceases with the actual physical exertion, for 'they also serve who only stand and wait.'"

The justice found that the men got about 30 hours of work per week taking slack and busy seasons together. The minimum cost of living was found to be 51s. a week; at 1s. 9d. an hour for 30 hours a man would receive 52s. 6d. per week. The rate therefore of 1s. 9d. per hour was fixed upon with time and a half for overtime. This reward is provisional and can be revised as soon as the employers "set their house in order" and devise some means whereby more steady work will be provided.

The need of correlating a wage award with the number of hours during which work can reasonably be expected has been recognized by a few English writers, also. Mrs. Hubback writing in the New Statesman for February 21, 1914 (Supplement p. 111) says "rates, whether time or piece, mean nothing till we know the average received during the year." In the same journal for June 6, 1914 (p. 264) it is stated that if the employers refuse to change their system of employment[1] they "must be compelled, by the extension of the Trade Boards Act or by some other administrative machinery to pay a rate of wages which will assure to all * * * whose services are required at one time or another a rate of wages indubitably sufficient to provide a tolerable living wage." Again and again when legislation has been proposed which would interfere with the "individual freedom" of the employer the cry has been raised that if we interfere with industry we are injuring the workman since he is dependent on the industry for his livelihood. In brief "we will take care of our workmen." But what becomes of the employer's

[1] See also, p. 310.

responsibility for his employees when orders for his wares are irregular or times are bad? It appears that some employers at least feel responsible only when it is convenient or profitable for them, for at other times we read "factory closed indefinitely," or "mills now running half time" or "10,000 workers laid off."

The importance of regular work has also been recognized in America. The Massachusetts Commission of 1911 said "Regularity of employment is as vital to the worker as a living wage. It presents another problem but yet one inextricably bound up with the question of what wages are necessary to maintain the employees of any given industry."[1] The Massachusetts Wage Board for the brush industry also saw the need of something more than an hour rate. "Any minimum wage finding which stops with merely naming a minimum hourly rate merely looks well on paper, but accomplishes no actual result beyond a somewhat pale moral effect."[2]

It must be obvious, therefore, to all thoughtful students of the problem that if we seriously desire to secure for working women a living wage we must either (1) grant them a wage rate sufficiently high to cover periods of unavoidable unemployment or (2) devise some method whereby fairly steady employment will be supplied. Some system of unemployment insurance might also well be considered in this connection. The problem is a difficult one and invites the serious attention of those interested in the welfare of working women.

The Economic Helplessness of Women

The position of women in respect to the problem of unemployment is one of peculiar helplessness. The entire industrial situation for them is beclouded by the tradition of their economic dependence. The right to a just and full compensation for one's labor regardless of questions of dependency is not yet universally accepted. Perhaps unconsciously the employer is influenced by this belief that women do not seriously desire permanent employment. He therefore frequently maintains toward female employees an attitude of irresponsibility. This belief is aggravated

[1] Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, 1912, p. 162.

[2] Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, Bulletin No. 3, p. 28.

by the fact that many working girls themselves look forward to marriage and withdrawal from industry within a few years and therefore do not have a strong incentive to strive for steady permanent work.

Irresponsibility on the part of both the employer and the employee is accentuated by the present unregulated system of employment found in most industrial establishments, and also by the very nature of women's work. In the first place it is very largely in seasonal trades, and in most of these we find a constant flux of workers, employed here or there for a few days or weeks and then passing on to the next job. In the confectionery and the paper box industries in New York City in 1913, for instance, the State Factory Investigating Commission says in its report, that three times as many people as the firms ordinarily employ at any one time, entered and left the industry during the year. This great shifting army is in no position to care for itself during periods of idleness by saving money, for wages in this unskilled group are notoriously low, and indeed there is ample evidence that but few working women receive wages sufficiently high to justify saving. Moreover, very few women belong to trade unions or benefit organizations of any sort. But even among the more highly skilled organized women the percentage of unemployment is very great, running in New York as high as 12 per cent. at the end of March, 1912, and 6 per cent. at the end of September, 1912.

Women workers, too, as a class are especially immobile. The majority of women workers are young and many of them live with their families. Numbers of the older women are struggling to support their children or to help in maintaining the family life. In any case, it is very difficult for them to move from town to town to secure work, and in the case of the younger girls, at least, it is obviously highly undesirable for them to leave the shelter and protection of their families. These peculiar disadvantages besetting the woman in industry make the problem of regular employment and a living wage an unusually serious and difficult one. Any solution must necessarily be preceded by a careful analysis and understanding of the real elements which go to make up this problem of assuring a real living wage to the woman worker who is not only poorly paid but is also irregularly employed.

Kinds of Irregular Work

The problem of unemployment is so complex that one's impressions become almost kaleidoscopic. If the point of view is turned ever so little, behold, one has an entirely new picture to study and analyze. It is not the purpose of this report, however, to add new material on the extent of unemployment, but rather to analyze and present in more detail that special picture which shows the effect of irregular employment upon the income of women workers.

Irregular work is of several varieties. Most obvious is that complete loss of work occurring when an employee is dropped entirely from the pay-roll of an establishment. Such unemployment means the stopping of all income and the discouraging — often heartbreaking — task of searching for a new job. At other times the employees are only temporarily "laid off." One department may be closed for a short time, or perhaps the entire establishment shuts down for a few days or weeks. Such periods of irregular work often extending over several months, are usually accompanied by a great deal of "short time" work — that is, employees may be retained on the pay-roll but have work for only a few hours a day with two or three days a week entirely unemployed. Thus a worker who averages $7 or $8 a week may earn during these months only $4 or $3 or even $2 a week. Not only does this wage loss occur with piece workers but it affects with almost equal force, time workers. It is this "short time" work which plays havoc with the annual income of the steady worker and which is seldom, if ever, balanced by the short period of overtime work and increased earnings. For example, Katia, a skilled garment operative, had no work at all for two months and a half during the year. But out of the remaining nine months and a half she had only three months of full-time work. During the other six and a half months she never worked more than five days a week and sometimes as little as two days.

Again, firms sometimes make a practice of retaining as many of their workers as possible during the dull season but reducing the rate of pay in place of "laying off" the employees. Both short time and a lower rate of pay reduced earnings in the case of a rose-maker in an artificial flower establishment, cited by Miss Van Kleeck. This girl "who earned $9 a week in the busy season

was employed through the dull summer months, but she worked only three days a week with half pay, except for an occasional week when more orders were received. Even then she was paid $2 less than in the winter for a full week's work, a premium to the firm for not 'laying her off.'" [1]

It is apparent that the woman industrial worker loses for practically every moment when she is not employed, even though she is idle through no fault of her own. This unique method of wage payment for the factory girl is quite in contrast with methods of wage payment among other classes of workers. Salaried workers, for instance, such as stenographers, clerks, agents, social workers, teachers, are paid a certain amount for a given period of time, usually a year or sometimes a number of months, during which time there may be many idle hours without affecting the income. Even salesgirls, paid by the week, often have periods of idleness during a day for which they do not lose in wages. Still another varied group of workers, practically paid by the piece, includes public chauffeurs, cab drivers, waiters, most lawyers and physicians. Such workers are employed and paid for a specific job. But fortunately for them their prices are adjusted, not only to the degree of skill involved, but also to the fact that employment is not continuous. We often rebel at the high fee of the cab driver or the doctor, and fail to realize that in addition to skill we are paying for the unemployed time of the man or woman. In contrast with these classes of workers the factory girl is paid practically for only the minutes when she is working. Even in laundries where work is fairly steady, time clocks are being installed, the workers sent off if they finish a few minutes early and corresponding deductions from their wages made.[2]

So serious is the need of a steady income that even many of those who have received industrial training in certain lines of employment have been compelled to give up their chosen work for something that offered a more steady income. Miss Odencrantz writing in the Survey for May 1, 1909, (p. 202) states that one-quarter of 420 girls who had graduated from a trade school had left the trades for which they were trained because

[1] "Artificial Flower Makers," Mary Van Kleeck, p. 43.

[2] Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, 1912, p. 155.

their employment was too irregular, and turned to others whose only common element was that of greater steadiness of employment. For instance, Elizabeth and her sister Emily made children's dresses for several years. In busy times they could earn from $6 to $9 a week, but when the slack season came they made only $3 or $4 and wasted much time waiting for work. They were usually laid off after Christmas for about three weeks and for several months in the summer. Since the mother was a widow and it was necessary for the girls to keep up the home, both finally turned to telephone operating, where each has steady work at $7 a week. Elizabeth said: "Dressmaking is a nice trade, and may be all right for other girls, but I have to support myself and make more than pin money. I can't afford to stay home three or four months every year."

In brief, then, we demand that the factory girl be on hand the moment she is "wanted," but the time she wastes waiting to be "wanted" is usually not cared for in any way nor are any steps taken as a rule to reduce this waiting period to a minimum. This unjust and unsocial policy tells its story in the anaemic and under-nourished girl, the tubercular girl, the criminal girl and at times in the girl "gone wrong."

Annual Incomes

This study of the actual incomes of working women brings out clearly the indisputable fact that "rate of pay" is but little indication of income. And this applies not alone to those younger "irregular" workers as yet unskilled and undisciplined who suffer from lack of work and low earnings, but it is found that for trained and experienced workers also, the actual income falls from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. below the possible income based on "rate of pay." It is practically impossible for the usual official statistics of "days in operation yearly" or "average number employed by months" to reveal this situation, but it is clearly seen in the more intensive investigations, particularly when the total numbers employed each month are compared with the total amounts paid out in wages each month. The totals for each week bring out the contrast even more clearly. In the paper box industry in New York City, during the year beginning November, 1912, the difference between the largest and smallest num-

bers employed each month was only 8 per cent., but this rose to 12 per cent. when weekly totals were compared. In contrast with this is the difference between the largest and smallest amounts paid out in wages. The difference in monthly wage totals was 15 per cent., but this rose to 30 per cent. when weekly totals were compared. While, therefore, the numbers employed varied only 12 per cent. from the busiest to the slackest week, the weekly wage totals varied 30 per cent., indicating that while many employees were kept on the pay-roll their wages, through short-time work, were being reduced very much below normal. In the making of women's clothing in New York City the difference in the average numbers employed in 1912 by months was 46 per cent., while the monthly wage variations rose to 60 per cent. In the confectionery industry in New York, during the year beginning September, 1912, the greatest weekly variation in numbers was 25 per cent., whereas the corresponding variation in wages was 35 per cent.

Comparisons between actual and possible earnings, based on average weekly earnings and rate of pay, reinforce these facts. In the paper box industry in New York City, 94 per cent. of a selected group of 246 women working under conditions above the average earned less than their scheduled rate of pay. Out of this 94 per cent., 62.1 per cent. fell more than 10 per cent. below their possible earnings for the period worked, and 41 per cent. fell more than 15 per cent. below. In the confectionery industry in a similarly selected group of 1,063 workers, 89.7 per cent. earned less than their scheduled rate of pay. Out of this 89.7 per cent., 63.4 per cent. fell more than 10 per cent. below their possible earnings for the period worked, and 44.6 per cent. fell more than 15 per cent. below. The average loss in actual earnings compared with rates for both groups was approximately 15 per cent.

An investigation by the Connecticut Commission on the Conditions of Wage-Earning Women and Minors[1] showed that for 942 females in the cotton industry the computed full time earnings were $9.17 while the average actual weekly earnings were only $8.05, a loss of 13.9 per cent.; in the silk industry for 1,175 females the corresponding figures were $7.40 and $6.26, a loss of

[1] Report of Feb. 4, 1913, pp. 67, 91, 153, 171, 200

18.2 per cent.; in brass factories for 662 females, the figures were $7.87 and $6.89, a loss of 14.3 per cent.; in the hardware industry for 701 females the figures were $6.79 and $5.95, a loss of 14.1 per cent.; in the metal trades for 2,541 females the figures were $7.41 and $6.50, a loss of 13.9 per cent. These results are taken from 50 factories in 14 localities, and the average actual weekly hours worked were 51 for all the industries except silk where the average hours were 50 per week, full time for most of these establishments being the legal 58 hours per week.

For the year 1913 the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor reported that among organized women workers, where one would expect to find relatively good conditions, the possible annual earnings averaged $483, while actual earnings fell to $429, a loss of 11.2 per cent. For all union garment workers including many women, the average loss was 15.7 per cent. Losses among unorganized workers would unquestionably be higher.

In her study on "The Living Wage for Women Workers," Miss Bosworth found that the factory workers she studied had an average yearly income of "nominally" $406.99. But they lost an average of nearly 13 per cent. from "slack work and no work," or $52.38, reducing their average annual income in this way to $354.61. Miss Bosworth therefore concluded that "the nominal rate is from 4 per cent. to 14 per cent. above the actual earnings." However, this is an average for all trades; for those where considerable irregularity exists investigations show that at least 15 per cent. should be added to any wage rate in order to cover losses from short-time work. The alternative to this would be, of course, to make employment more regular and to consider some form of unemployment insurance.

From the point of view of material values in dollars and cents, perhaps, the usual official wage statistics of "averages" may be of value. But for the human being who must have clothing, shelter and a certain amount of food, if not the proverbial three square meals each day, the average wage or average loss of any group of workers has but little more meaning than "rate of pay." While group averages show wage losses of about 15 per cent., yet when the wages of individual girls are taken out of the statistical

mass, we frequently find variations for the time they are on the payroll, of 75 per cent. between the largest and smallest amounts received each week, with losses from possible earnings running as high as 35 per cent. Take the story of Tina, for instance. Tina was a machine operator in a clothing factory. During the busy seasons, her weekly wage averaged $7 or $8 a week. But in order to come up to this level she had to work overtime till 8 o'clock in the evening for two or three nights a week during the height of the season. And work was so dull in the other half of the year, that her average weekly wage then fell to $3 or $3.50 a week and her total income for the year was only about $262.[1] She lost during the year about a third of her full-time wage. Well may such a girl ask, "What do I care if I average $6.12 a week for the year. If I have to live for seven or eight weeks in January, February or March on $4 or $3, or even $2 a week, with now and then nothing at all, how is it going to help me if I earn $8 or $10 for four or five weeks next November or December?" From the point of view of a living wage for the individual a certain steady income must be assured each week. With wages for the great majority too low to permit a margin for saving it otherwise becomes impossible for a worker to plan wisely or to maintain her standard of self respect or efficiency.

Overtime

The facts invariably discovered in every industry make it impossible for anyone to say "Well, after all they make as much by overtime work in the rush season as they lose in dull times." In the first place, the amount of overtime is far less in actual hours than the amount of slack time; and what overtime there is, is not worked by the entire force. For example, only a third of the women employed in decorating glass worked any overtime at all, according to the federal investigation of 1907-8. The overtime worked by this minority of the employees occurred an average of thirteen times and was most often of two to four hours duration. Some forty hours of overtime yearly worked by a third of the women cannot bring in a return which will

[1] "Making Both Ends Meet," Sue Ainslee Clark and Edith Wyatt, p. 121.

make up for the entire closing of many glass factories during the two summer months — a sixth of the year. Then often there is no extra payment for the overtime of time workers. Salesgirls, for example, seldom get anything extra except "supper money." Three-fifths of the Washington, D. C., factory girls, a government investigation in 1911 showed, were not paid for their after-hours work. Again the output of piece workers is very likely to fall off relatively, because they grow so tired during the long hours, that their gains are much less proportionally than their length of time at work would indicate.

An instance of this last fact is a computation of the hourly wages of three piece-workers in a Milwaukee tannery. The women were paid bi-monthly, and their regular working hours during each fortnight were 120. One earned 18 cents an hour working full time, while working over time her hourly earnings fell as low as 12 cents. The hourly earnings of the second were reduced from 20 cents as low as 8 cents when she worked overtime and the third suffered a reduction of hourly earnings from 15½ cents to about 10½ cents under the same conditions.[1]

In the Boston study of factory girls' budgets, previously referred to,[2] it was found that they lost nearly 13 per cent. on account of industrial conditions. They gained less than 1 per cent. from overtime, only $3.76, while they lost an average of $52.38, yearly. But the serious evils of overtime work are too well known to justify any fair minded person in countenancing long hours as a possible means of making up wage losses due to underemployment.

Dovetailing

Just how extensive is the opportunity for a woman thrown out of work in one trade to find employment quickly in another is a matter on which there is but little reliable information. As an index of conditions, however, a comparison has been made, of the numbers employed by months in New York City and "upstate" for the various industries for which such information was

[1] "Women Workers in Milwaukee Tanneries," Irene Osgood, in Report of Wisconsin Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1907–8. Part VII, p. 1058.

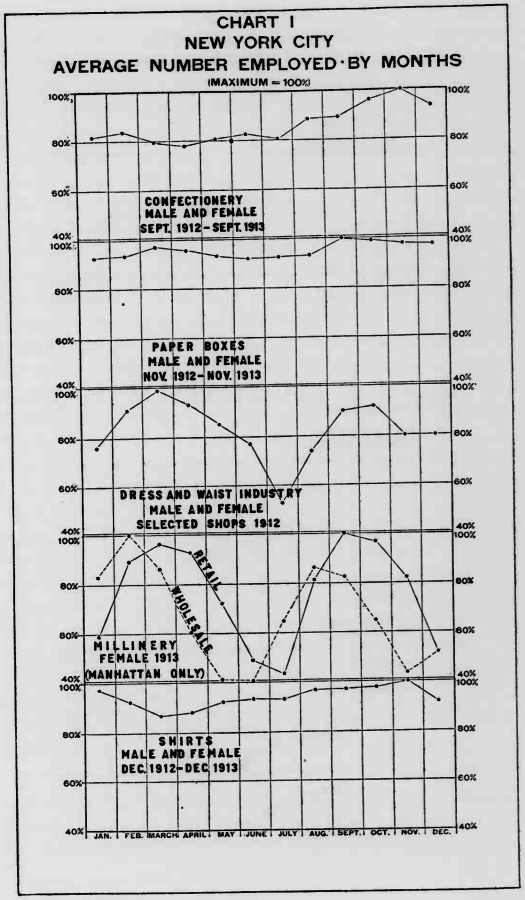
[2] "The Living Wage for Women Workers," M. Louise Bosworth, pp. 33–40.

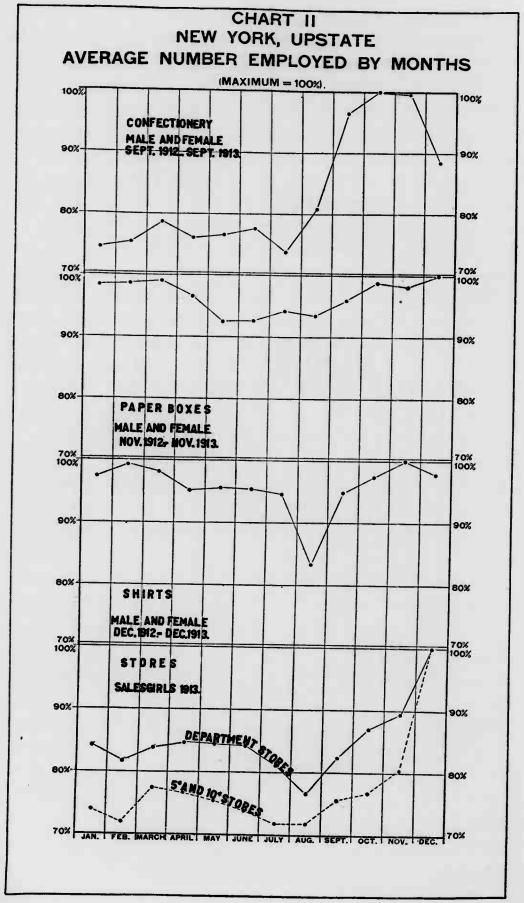
available. (See Charts I and II.) Generally speaking, it may be seen that the busy seasons either coincide or overlap sufficiently to make anything like complete dovetailing an utter impossibility. In almost all of them there are two busy seasons coming in the spring and fall and two dull seasons, one after Christmas and the other in the summer. There are differences in the degree to which the numbers fluctuate, but variations follow the same general course except in the manufacture of shirts in New York City. There the fall busy season occurs as in other trades, but spring is the dullest time and the summer is active. But since the busiest season in shirt making comes in the late fall along with that of all the other industries, it would be impossible for unemployed operatives of other trades to turn to shirt-making during their slack summer period without displacing regular employees whose services would be needed later on, when the former had returned to their usual work.

An example of the difficulties of overlapping of the seasons in various industries, was brought out through efforts made in Boston a few years ago to find work for milliners during the summer dull season. Places were found for them doing film developing, in which the largest number of workers are needed during the summer. But, in order to get positions, the girls had to agree to remain till October 1st, whereas they were needed in millinery by the first of September. A similar effort was made to dovetail their work with that of rebinding old books, which is another summer occupation, but here again the season overlaps about a month with that of millinery.

Any successful system of dovetailing employments, moreover, would at best benefit only those workers who lose their places entirely, and would be of no help when short hours were worked or a few days lost at irregular intervals, as happens so frequently. The only valid conclusion on the question seems to be that drawn by the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, in 1911,[1] which said, after careful investigation, "No worker can count on casual work or a supplementary job to fill in the time lost by industrial causes."

[1] Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, 1912, p. 162.





In addition to this "time" difficulty a worker has also to consider the kind of work to be done. If she has acquired any skill or experience in a particular line she may not be able to turn indiscriminately to an entirely different kind of work. Such a change of occupation may mean loss of skill — for skill to-day is usually experience and speed in one particular motion or set of motions and tends to disappear if interrupted. Among the many other evils besetting the girl trying to piece out a year's work will be found a lowering of the wage standard, breaking down of habits of regularity thus tending to inefficiency, and a lowering of self confidence resulting in a loss of economic bargaining power. It is during these periods of searching for work that temptation to immorality becomes strong. A vivid picture of the human meaning of job-hunting was given in a Chicago paper during the summer of 1913: "For the last ten days I have been going to the loop every day to look for work. I am there at eight o'clock in the morning. I look for work until eleven. From eleven to twelve is the lunch period in most big establishments and it is useless to try to see anybody at that time. My lunch in a cafeteria gives me a rest of fifteen or twenty minutes. Then I am back again on the sidewalk. The chase from building to building during the morning and the constant dodging of automobiles tire me. Is there a place where I can go to rest?" Another girl summed up the situation as follows: "Yes, I get the papers right away in the morning, but when you come to the place there are always so many others waiting, and then it is too late to go to any other place. Sometimes the man takes your name and says he will let you know in a couple of days. You wait, but you don't hear a word from him. Half the time he doesn't want anybody. I just hate to look for work. You always feel kind of upset like, and don't feel like doing anything at home."[1]

The Labor Force

To those familiar with industrial conditions it has become a commonplace to see large groups of workers, particularly women and children, suddenly "laid off" at certain periods of the year.

[1] Survey, May 1, 1909, p. 210.

The Christmas "lay off" in department stores and the confectionery industry, the summer "dull seasons" in the garment trades, and the dismissal of milliners after the "season" is over present a familiar spectacle. This condition has been illustrated by facts, figures, charts, curves, diagrams and tables — all of which have commanded respectful attention. But the real problem is, who is at fault? How many are thus affected? How seriously do they suffer? What shall be done about them?

In the analysis of the situation as to the irregular employment of women there appear three main classes of workers fairly well defined.

1. The smaller group of those permanently employed, forming the backbone of the labor force.

2. Those who are employed for the entire busy season, but are laid off at its close.

3. Those who drift in and out of the industry working only a few days or weeks at a time in one place.

In most industrial establishments there exists that smaller class of employees (group 1) consisting of the more skilled and permanent workers, permanent in the sense that they remain on the payroll for at least a year. They are the older more responsible workers who are more frequently entirely dependent upon their earnings, often with relatives or families dependent upon them, and are more likely to be employed at the higher rates of wages. Nominally this class of employees is referred to as "steady" workers but from the point of view of earnings we have seen that even these workers suffer large wage losses due to slack work in the dull season.

The second group of workers consists of those who for various reasons are dropped from the payroll from the time the dull season begins until the arrival of the busy season. In some lines of work such as confectionery and department stores a very large "lay off" occurs immediately after Christmas. In other kinds of work, as in paper boxes, the "lay off" is more gradual. There are undoubtedly a few employees, some of them perhaps married, who plan to go into the industry only during the busy season in order to supplement the family income, perhaps for personal

reasons or more likely to tide the family over a financial depression due to sickness or unemployment of the male breadwinner. But the larger group consists of responsible, steady women, many of them entirely dependent on their own resources, others with families depending upon them. These are the workers who suffer most by enforced periods of unemployment.

On the other hand there are undoubtedly in this class, also, large numbers of girls to whom a "lay off" is not a serious problem — girls who are partly or entirely supported by parents or relatives and who have not yet felt the necessity of steady permanent work. This class of workers merges into the last group (3) and the two together form one of the most serious obstacles to the responsible worker seeking to earn a living wage.

This third group of workers consists of those who are constantly shifting in and out of the industry staying only a few days or weeks in one place. The existence of this last group is made clear by a study of almost any payroll; for it is almost universally true that, during the course of a year, for one position, a succession of persons are hired and discharged, or leave for some reason. The State Factory Commission's investigation in New York City showed that in the confectionery industry 45 per cent., and in the paper-box industry, 40 per cent. stayed four weeks or less in the same factory. Miss Van Kleeck showed that in millinery 52 per cent. stayed only eight weeks or less. In the manufacture of men's clothing, a more steady trade, an investigation of conditions in the five leading cities in the trade, 1907–8, showed that 28 per cent. of the women worked less than five weeks in the same place. Among salesgirls the conditions are similar. In a large Boston store 20.8 per cent. remained less than five weeks, while a Washington, D. C., investigation showed that 25 per cent. remained three months or less.

The following table giving the experience of the seven largest department stores in New York city for 1913 shows a like enormous flux of employees constantly passing through their doors. With a single exception, the number of changes is greater than the average number employed.

TABLE 1
RETAIL STORES, NEW YORK CITY, 1913
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE SEVEN LARGEST ESTABLISHMENTS
(New York State Factory Investigating Commission)

Average number employed	Number added during the year	Number dropped or leaving during the year
5,000	5,500	.....
4,296	5,979	5,950
4,272	6,809	6,712
3,750	12,159	10,382
3,500	8,155	8,750
3,497	875	940
2,313	2,967	2,539

In laundries, too, a very great shifting of workers is constantly taking place. One Massachusetts establishment reported that 57 per cent. remained less than three months; another that 76 per cent. remained less than three months; while a Washington employer stated that "60 to 90 days eliminates a crew completely."

These three classes are of course not defined by hard and fast lines. They merge into one another and workers are constantly passing from one class to another. Frequently bad industrial conditions will throw steady workers back into the casual labor class.

In the women employing industries, therefore, it is apparent that there are large numbers of young girls, many of whom have not yet reached the years of responsibility, who are not entirely dependent upon their own earnings for support and who expect to be in industry for only a short time. For this class of worker employment is largely the result of preference or custom being to some extent a matter of pin-money and often looked upon as a means of release from monotonous home duties to be replaced by social enjoyment and the companionship of friends. Were it not for the tragic effect which the presence of this proportionally small group of workers has upon the mass of women employees we might pass them by unnoticed. But in this very group lies the key to not a little of the distress of the larger more responsible group.

It is this great throng of young, untrained, undisciplined workers which supplies the employer with help for the few busy months.

At other times they drift in and out, from establishment to establishment or from trade to trade, taking positions at whatever they can get, keeping out the older girls who are accustomed to a slightly higher wage, and cutting down the income of the steady responsible worker. Because this class of casuals is ever present the employer finds it easier to take them as they come and any question of regularizing his business is passed by. In this way they increase the discontinuous employment of the steady worker, and tend to make permanent a disorganized labor market.

The employer, too, has frequently complained of the irresponsibility of these workers. On this point one Massachusetts employer said, "the result of a big seasonal demand for female labor like this means that during the dull time of the year the girls we discharge at Christmas drift into other lines of employment, consequently, when our biggest demand comes, from September to December, we are compelled to again teach many inexperienced girls. The small output and loss through spoilage of the inexperienced girls make them undesirable help. In many cases, even at a small rate of pay, they increase the labor cost on the goods materially." Of these "only a small percentage become of any value as actual producers. Of a lot of say 50 girls hired on Monday morning we will often lose or discharge 25 of them before the end of the week. Before the end of the second week the lot will sometimes be reduced to 10."[1] Another Massachusetts employer, speaking of the "heedlessness, irresponsibility, and lack of ambition" found in such young workers, declared that, because he had to employ so many of them, "the problem of candy making is the labor question."[2] In short, the presence of this class of workers is one of the main causes for the existing disorganization of industrial employment. Moreover, most of their employment is at work which neither trains them nor offers them the opportunity of any great advancement. Their presence in industry cannot be justified from any social point of view.

Before we can hope, therefore, to handle effectively the problem of regular employment and a real living wage for the older and needy worker, and, as a first step toward the better organization

[1] Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, 1912, p. 66.
[2] Ibid., p. 53.

of industry, particular attention must be given to this special class of workers.

The first step toward such a program obviously would be to reduce the supply of this untrained and irresponsible group by partially shutting them out of industry for a period of time. The present age of admission to industry in several states is sixteen years. By extending this limitation to all states and extending this controlled period possibly up to the age of eighteen a great mass of casual labor would at once be removed, and would leave the field open for older and more responsible workers. During these years attention could be given to the proper physical and educational training of young women. With the increased emphasis that is being placed upon industrial education, this period might well be devoted to a combination of technical and general training, together with practical experience in shop work. For it will probably always be true that, due to changing seasons and emergency demands, many industries will need for certain short periods of time extra help. By supplying this demand as far as possible from the group of young women, practical shop training would be secured and, in addition, the wages earned would aid in relieving economic pressure. The extent of actual factory work should be limited to certain periods at the discretion of the educational authorities, and the actual placing in establishments should be made through the medium of the Labor Exchanges. The close of the busy season would then find the workers returning to the training school instead of drifting from place to place and from job to job as at present.

In this way the necessary surplus pool of labor would be utilized to the best advantage of all concerned. Such physical and industrial training would better prepare young women for a useful, efficient life, and at the same time would leave a more open field of employment with more regular work at higher wages for the older responsible workers. There should be no difficulty in securing the cooperation of the employer in such a plan, since for many years his constant complaint has been the untrained, careless and irresponsible character of so large a part of the labor force. In but few cases, however, has there been sufficient pressure upon

the employer, or initiative on his part, to cause him to change his present haphazard system of employment. For the more steady workers who nevertheless suffer periods of unemployment, some form of unemployment insurance should be considered. By this method the wage losses would be distributed, in part at least, between all parties concerned instead of, as at present, allowing them to fall entirely upon the worker, the person least able to bear them.

Summary and Conclusion

All facts agree that actual earnings fall far short of possible earnings based upon "rate of pay." This investigation leads also to the conclusion that, at least for the workers here considered, the average girl or woman loses in wages an amount equal to no less than 15 per cent. of her possible earnings. The younger more irregular worker loses an even greater amount.

In addition, the investigation shows that very many of the women in seasonal trades cannot find work at the same place for the entire year, while in many trades, from a quarter to one-half remain in one place only three months or less. A striking illustration of the constant flux of workers in and out of different establishments was found by the Factory Investigating Commission in the records of one large New York City department store, which hired over 12,000 employees in order to maintain an average permanent force of a little over 3,000. In ten confectionery establishments 3,138 were employed to maintain an average force of 953 people. In nine paper-box establishments 1,657 were employed to maintain an average force of 792 workers. This same shifting is found everywhere in varying degrees.

It must be quite obvious, therefore, that a living income is dependent not only upon a reasonable daily or weekly wage but also upon reasonable regularity of employment. This latter problem presents many difficulties, particularly with industry disorganized as at present. With such large surplus pools of labor to draw from only the few more farsighted employers will initiate reforms in their systems of employment. Moreover, the members of this surplus pool are obtaining practically no training nor are they

receiving anything approaching a living wage. But by withdrawing them from the labor market, except for short periods during the "busy season," the much needed special training can be supplied and positions will be left open for older responsible workers. Unless reasonable regularity of employment can be definitely assured, a living wage through the year can be secured only by setting up a wage rate sufficiently high to cover unemployed periods of time, or by establishing some form of unemployment insurance.

II. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF INDUSTRIES

THE PAPER BOX INDUSTRY

Introduction

Years ago, when we went to the grocery store to buy crackers, the grocer scooped them up out of a barrel and put them into a paper bag for us. Now we get them in a neat little paper box. More and more the grocer's shelves are filled with "package goods," which the housewife prefers because they are more likely to be fresh and free from germs and dust. Every Christmas sees a greater variety of fancy articles offered for sale in "ornamental holly boxes suitable for gifts." All our clothing, hats, and shoes are delivered to us boxed. The ubiquitous paper box serves as container for articles as different as cigarettes and writing paper, phonograph records and ice-cream, electric light bulbs and candy.

General Statistics

With such an increase in the use of paper boxes, it is not surprising that the last few years have witnessed a considerable development in the industry. According to the United States Census of Manufactures, the number of wage-earners of both sexes employed has increased from some 27,000 to nearly 40,000, a gain of over 48 per cent. in the ten years between 1899 and 1909. The manufacture of paper boxes is, moreover, one of the larger "women-employing" industries of the United States. In 1909 there was an average number of 23,724 women over 16 at work in paperbox establishments, as against 20,527 in 1904, and 18,192 in 1899, an increase of 30 per cent. in the decade, though during the same period the number of men increased 67 per cent. Although women at present form almost exactly three-fifths of the total number of wage earners in paper box making and are thus decidedly in the majority, yet the proportion of men is increasing, if very gradually. In 1880, women formed 70 per cent. of the entire labor force, 65 per cent. in 1899, and 60 per cent. in 1909.

This tendency toward displacement of the women workers may or may not continue, but remembering that the large majority of the 2,800 workers under 16 are girls, the statement still holds that paper box making is "woman's work."

New York employs by far the greater number of women workers in this industry, nearly 8,000; Pennsylvania follows with over 3,000; Massachusetts with 2,600, and Illinois with 2,400. In Ohio are found 1,500, in New Jersey nearly 1,400, and somewhat over 1,000 in Connecticut.[1] Nearly 6,000 more are scattered in smaller numbers over the remaining states.

Owing to its low wage level this industry is one frequently suggested for investigation by Minimum Wage Commissions. It is therefore especially important to study the effects of irregularity on wages in the industry, and to make a comparison of wage rates and actual earnings in order to see whether or not a minimum wage rate would really provide a paper box worker with a living wage.

Seasonal Variations

The seasonal variations which exist in the paper box industry naturally depend on and precede variations in the demand for goods "put up in pasteboard." On that account, the work on some sorts of boxes, such as those for cigarettes and shoes, is reasonably steady. But, on the whole, the buying for clothing in the spring and fall and the Christmas demand for all sorts of fancy and candy boxes, makes the industry one of decided seasonal irregularity.

The busiest season comes in the fall, from Labor Day to Christmas, followed by an extremely dull season. The trade revives again for several weeks before Easter, for a shorter and less extreme rush season, produced mainly by the demands of the clothing trade. Then another slack period lasts well through the summer. During the rush times, more or less overtime is

[1] FANCY AND PAPER BOXES

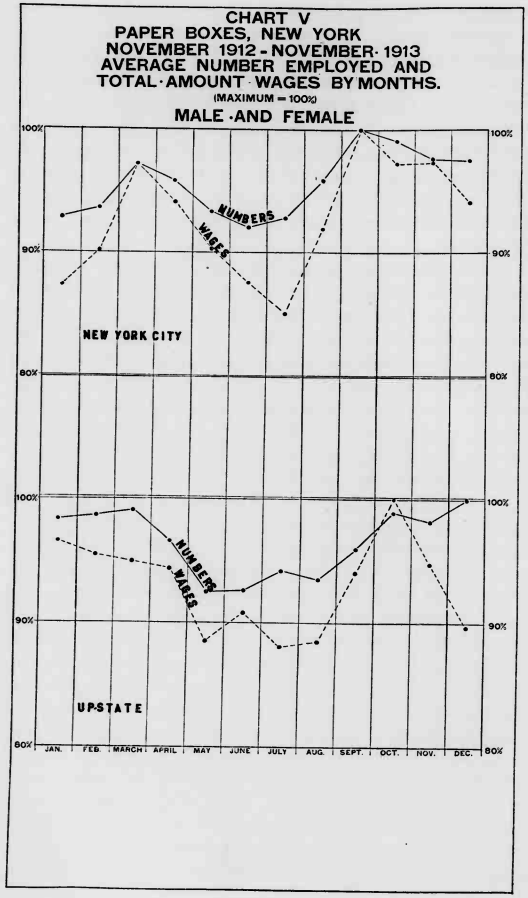
Number of Women Over 16 Employed December 15, 1909

[United States Census of Manufactures, Vol. IX, Table II for each State]

New York	7,928	New Jersey	1,387
Pennsylvania	3,032	Connecticut	1,057
Massachusetts	2,629	Other States	5,932
Illinois	2,478		
Ohio	1,518	Total	25,961

worked in nearly every prosperous factory and Sunday work also is sometimes found. Most manufacturers believe this cannot be avoided, since orders come at short notice and paper boxes are too bulky in proportion to their values for profitable storage; the fire-hazard also is too great to risk making them for stock. The reverse of the two busy seasons is found in the dullness of the trade after Christmas and its still greater slackness in the summer. Here is the typical seasonal variation of so many of the industries where large numbers of women are found — very busy in the fall, dull after Christmas, busy in the spring and very dull in the summer.

Wherever data could be obtained, from Massachusetts to California, from Maryland to Oregon, and in the great industrial states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Wisconsin, a like alternation of rush seasons in the spring and fall with slack in the winter and summer was found. For instance, in Philadelphia an investigation of five firms in 1913 disclosed the fact that after Christmas they made wholesale dismissals to the extent of 24.3 per cent. of their force. In New York City last year the Factory Investigating Commission found that the number of employees rose to 6,700 just before Christmas and fell to 6,100 directly after that time. What this irregularity and loss of working time means to the women is well illustrated by the story of Rose, a Russian girl, twenty-three years old. Her family was still in Russia, so she had to look out for herself entirely. In five years she advanced in wages from $3.50 to $5.50 a week. But out of this meager sum she had to save enough to carry her over the slack season, and she was out of work fourteen weeks during the year. This made her average weekly earnings just $4.02 — over 25 per cent. lower than her rate of wages. Even the girls nominally at work every week in the year for the same firm are found to suffer large reductions in wages on account of their short hours in the dull season. One girl received an average weekly wage of only $6.14 instead of her regular rate of $7.25, another $8.27 in place of $9.45, a third $4.58, instead of $5. These are examples taken quite at random. For a girl to average more than her rate is very unusual. These facts indicate the need for further study of the irregularity of the industry and its effect on wages,



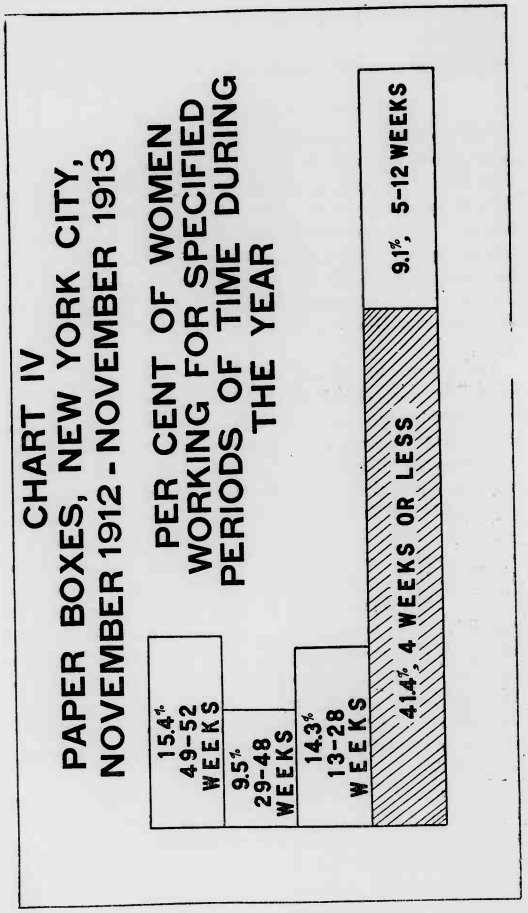
and they point toward the conclusion that greater regularity of employment as well as a minimum wage rate is needed to obtain for the steady, responsible, mature women workers a *living income.*

Statistics of Irregular Employment

The statistics of irregularity most commonly found in state labor reports are from the point of view of the industry rather than that of the workers, and are those of "average number of days in operation yearly" and "average number employed by months." From published statistics on both of these points it does not appear that the manufacture of paper boxes is a particularly seasonal industry. For instance, out of a possible 305 working days yearly, Massachusetts factories were in operation 290 days, and New Jersey and Pennsylvania factories 292 days in 1912.

The statistics of the varying "number employed by months" during the year are also shown graphically in Chart III. The largest number in any one month is considered 100 per cent. and the per cent. for every other month reckoned with that as a base. The states for which this was obtainable and the latest years for which it is compiled, are Massachusetts in 1912, New Jersey in 1912 and Wisconsin in 1910. It will be seen that the curve for each state follows a similar course and brings out the fall rush with its peak in November, the lesser spring busy season, the short drop in January and the long dull period of the summer months. The situation in New York City and in the rest of the state in 1913, as found by the State Factory Investigating Commission, is also presented in this chart. From these figures the fluctuations do not appear to be extreme, since the difference between the largest and smallest number was only 12 per cent. in Massachusetts and New Jersey in 1912, 18 per cent. in Wisconsin in 1910, and 8 per cent. in New York for the year ending November 1913.

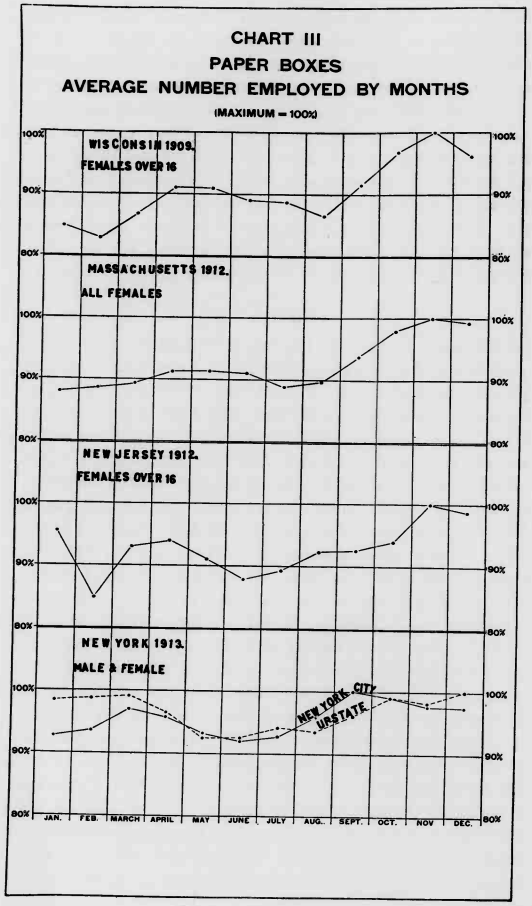
From most of the official statistics, then, it would not seem that the paper box industry was as seriously irregular as many others, yet the contrary is the fact. A consideration of what these two classes of statistics show and do not show, will solve the puzzle. When the "number of days in operation yearly" is given, there is nothing to tell us whether one department or all are at work,



whether or not those at work are on full time or whether a few scattered girls or the full force are working. Statistics as to "average number employed by months" do give us some idea of the latter, but in the paper box industry it is the custom not to close the factory for any length of time, nor to dismiss employees to any very large extent, but to hold as nearly as possible the full force on short time, and consequently on short pay, in order to have the workers ready, not only for the busy season, but also to take care of the occasional order that may come in from time to time. The more detailed statistics following will show further that these measurements alone by no means bring out the entire effect of irregular employment on the income of the worker.

Shifting

In the paper box industry the flux of workers is very great; it is a constantly changing group on which all the seasonal variations fall. In New York City in 1912–13, only a quarter of the women paper-box workers stayed in the same place more than six months. Three-fifths stayed three months or less (see Chart IV), one-half less than two months and two-fifths four weeks or less. Incredibly large numbers drift in for a few days or even hours and then drift out again. Only 15 per cent. were what might be called steady workers, staying eleven months or more out of the year in the same establishment. Three times as many people as were employed at any one time were dropped and added during the year. It is of course true that many of these changes were undoubtedly due to personal reasons. A low-grade, poorly paid, little skilled body of workers in an ever-changing one. Yet such facts as the wholesale dismissal of workers in Philadelphia after Christmas previously mentioned, show that the irregularity of the industry must be held responsible for no small part of the shifting. Here, then, is the casual labor force, the three-girls-for-two-jobs state of affairs, which Beveridge, the English authority, believes to be the fundamental cause of unemployment. A wage rate that made no allowance for irregularity of employment would mean little to these people, who are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Rather, some pressure is needed that will force them out and make it profitable for the manufacturer to furnish steady employment to responsible workers.



Variation in Earnings

In order to discover the great seriousness of seasonal variations in this industry, we must turn to variations in earnings. The first point to be considered is a comparison of the variation in earnings with the variation in numbers, month by month. Such a comparison, for New York City, 1912–13, and for the rest of the State, as given by the State Factory Investigating Commission, shows a considerable loss in actual as compared with possible earnings. In these monthly averages (see Chart V) the extreme weekly variations are smoothed out, yet there is a 15 per cent. difference between the largest and smallest amount of wages, in contrast to an 8 per cent. variation in numbers. The broken line, it will be noted, drops far below the solid one showing that for those employees who were kept on the pay roll, wages fell considerably below normal. But by taking the original figures for the totals of wages and using the totals per week instead of per month, the largest amount paid out is found to be $60,878 for the last week of September and the smallest $43,125 for the first week of January. There is a difference here of nearly 30 per cent. (29.3 per cent.) while the largest difference in numbers by weeks is just about 12 per cent. This result corresponds closely to the testimony of 200 women workers questioned by the Factory Investigating Commission about their weekly wages at different seasons. Their average weekly pay varied from $5.68 in dull times to $8.13 in the busy season, a difference of almost exactly 30 per cent.

The New York City investigation further shows that the "ordinary" average weekly wage of a woman worker was $7.36. That is about 10 per cent. less than the "rush reason" weekly wage. We have similar weekly averages for women workers in California and Maryland from an investigation made by the United States Bureau of Labor in 1911. There was a difference of more than 20 per cent. between the weekly average for rush and normal seasons in California ($8.99 and $7.03) and of almost exactly 20 per cent. in Maryland ($6.24 and $5.01). Differences in earnings from season to season do not seem, therefore, to be confined to New York. Clearly then any minimum wage, based, as practically all awards in this country have been thus far, on

the full time work of the " normal " season, would not give women a living wage when this industry was slack, and offers no guarantee against such dull times.

To examine further the relation between rates and actual earnings, and to determine whether or not earnings usually fell below the rate, a comparison was made of the weekly wage rates of 246 of the women paper box workers in New York City with their actual average weekly wages for the period worked. These figures represent conditions far above the average, since only the best factories keep their books so that reliable figures can be obtained. That this selected group represents to a much greater degree the more permanent class of workers is indicated by the fact that 32 per cent. were annual workers as against 15 per cent. of annual workers for the entire labor force. In addition, to avoid including some absences for personal reasons, when the average weekly earnings were computed, the weeks in which a woman was not working at all were omitted, although the number of such absences greatly increases in the dull seasons and the omission therefore undoubtedly excludes in many cases a part of the wage loss due to industrial conditions. For this particular study therefore the steadier workers in the better factories are under consideration and a certain amount of unemployment is being left out of account.

As already said, comparison was made of the rate of pay and the average weekly earnings of 246 such adult women time workers in the paper box industry. The average weekly earnings of 94 per cent. of these women were below their stated rate of pay. Only 8, or 3½ per cent. had average weekly earnings equal to their rate of pay. The weekly earnings of just 6, or 2½ per cent. of the whole group averaged higher than their rate of pay. For that great majority of the women whose earnings fell below their rate, tables were made to show first by wage groups and secondly by length of time in the same factory, what per cent. of the rate they lost. (See Table 2.) According to the table we find that 62.1 per cent., almost two-thirds, lost over 10 per cent. of their supposed wage during the time they worked, with 26 per cent. losing from 16 to 25 per cent. and 15 per cent. losing more than 25 per cent.— over a quarter — of their supposed income for the

period they worked. It is evident that the lowest paid and most shifting workers are the ones suffering the heaviest losses.

Of those earning under $5, 77.7% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $5–5.99, 63% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $6–6.99, 50% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $7–7.99, 50% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $8–8.99, 35.8% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $9 and over, 28.1% lost over 10% of wages.

When the loss from the rate is computed by length of service, the heavier losses of the " short-time girl " are even more striking.

Of those staying 1–4 weeks in same factory, 85.7% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 5–13 weeks in same factory, 64.1% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 14–26 weeks in same factory, 75.5% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 27–47 weeks in same factory, 57.2% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 48–52 weeks in same factory, 21% lost over 10% of wages.

TABLE 2

PAPER BOXES. NEW YORK CITY. NOVEMBER, 1912–1913

SELECTED FEMALE TIME WORKERS OVER 16. COMPARISON OF RATE OF PAY AND ACTUAL AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

1A. NUMBERS LOSING GIVEN PERCENTAGES OF THEIR RATE, BY WAGE GROUPS

RATE	PERCENTAGE LOST					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
Under $5 00	6	10	17	28	11	72
$5 00– 5 99	14	25	21	24	18	102
6 00– 6 99	2	5	1	1	1	10
7 00– 7 99	3	3	3	3	0	12
8 00– 8 99	3	6	3	2	0	14
9 00 and over	5	9	3	1	4	22
Total	33	58	48	59	34	232

1B. Per Cent Losing Given Percentages of Their Rate, by Wage Groups

Rate	Percentage Lost					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
Under $5 00	8.3	13.9	23.6	38.9	15.2	100.0
$5 00– 5 99	14.0	23.0	21.6	24.0	18.0	100.0
6 00– 6 99	20.0	50.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	100.0
7 00– 7 99	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	.....	100.0
8 00– 8 99	21.4	42.8	21.4	14.4	.....	100.0
9 00 and over	23.8	38.1	14.3	4.8	19.0	100.0
Total	14.1	23.8	21.1	26.0	15.0	100.0

2A. Numbers Losing Given Percentages of Their Rate, by Length of Time in Same Factory

Length of Time in Same Factory	Percentage Lost					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
1– 4 weeks	4	4	6	11	19	44
5–13 weeks	8	16	10	23	10	67
14–26 weeks	3	8	15	14	5	45
27–47 weeks	8	9	10	10	0	37
48–52 weeks	10	21	7	1	0	39
Total	33	58	48	59	34	232

2B. Per Cent Losing Given Percentages of Their Rate, by Length of Time in Same Factory

Length of Time in Same Factory	Percentage Lost					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–26 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
1– 4 weeks	7.1	7.1	14.3	26.2	45.2	100.0
5–13 weeks	11.9	23.9	14.9	34.3	14.9	100.0
14–26 weeks	6.7	17.8	33.3	31.1	11.1	100.0
27–47 weeks	22.9	20.0	28.6	28.6	.....	100.0
48–52 weeks	26.3	52.6	18.4	2.6	.....	100.0
Total	14.1	23.8	21.1	26.0	15.0	100.0

It may be noted that, among the six who earned more than their rate, the gains were small, none over 10 per cent., and that three of the women who gained were "annual workers" — over 48 weeks in the same position.

We find in this selected group, therefore, consisting of the better class workers under the more favorable conditions, that 94 per cent. did not succeed in earning the rate of wages at which they were employed, and that nearly two-thirds of them (62.1 per cent.) lost more than 10 per cent. of their supposed wages. Undoubtedly if similar figures could be computed for the entire industry, even larger losses would be brought out. For instance, for the week in which the Commission collected wage data, rates and earnings in one of the factories especially studied were compared with rates and earnings in a factory keeping no records available for yearly comparisons. Both factories manufactured a similar line of goods, and the factory having yearly records of earnings was one in which about two-fifths of all the cases were found. In the latter establishment no woman was rated at less than $5 for the week but 9 per cent. received less than that sum, while in the other factory 12.7 per cent. were rated at less than $5 and 37.4 per cent. received below that amount. It is the latter which is typical of the majority of factories in the city and therefore the trade as a whole would show annual wage-losses even greater than those here discussed.

Moreover, the wage rates just considered are *averages* for the period covered. They in no way show the variation from week to week in a girl's wage. An average is only a composite photograph after all and may or may not represent the experience of any number of workers and, also as in the photograph, the extreme variations are smoothed out. When we trace the changes in a girl's wages week by week, then this irregularity which we chart and discuss like an academic problem, without really feeling it, becomes a human problem, a hard condition with which human beings are struggling. Out of the thousands of similar records, the New York State Factory Commission quotes weekly wages for six girls, "steady, representative workers in different factories." The charts (VI and VII) show, more plainly than words, the way in which the girls' wages vary from week to week. The first of the charts gives for the three piece workers, Annie, Ida and Sarah, their wages averaged by months. Like all averages, it conceals the greatest variations, but the second chart gives their actual *weekly* wages for the third quarter of the year, which is not the period of extreme fluctuations. Because piece workers are paid in proportion to their product, many people think the quick, good worker is rewarded for her unusual ability. But what

CHART VI

PAPER BOXES, NEW YORK CITY

WEEKLY WAGES OF THREE PIECE-WORKERS

FOR A YEAR. AVERAGED BY MONTHS

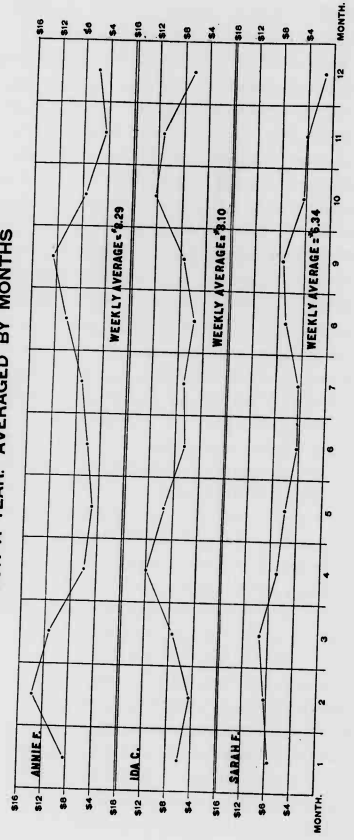
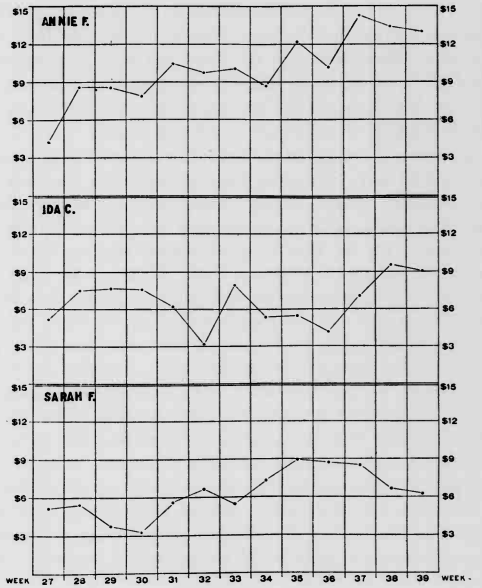


CHART VII

PAPER BOXES NEW YORK CITY

WEEKLY WAGES OF THREE PIECE-WORKERS

FOR THREE MONTHS



happens to her wage for that much longer period when there is only a little work on hand, and when, after a few hours, she is sent home for the rest of the day? These charts, with their high and low points in each case corresponding to the busy and dull seasons, show clearly how the seasonal variations in the industry cause most of the changes in these girls' wages. Ida's highest weekly wage is $13.98 and her lowest $3.20. Annie's varies between $14.87 and $3.20, Sarah's weekly wages run all the way down from $10.62 to $2.68. When we get down to the actual amounts received by these piece workers, we find just about a 75 per cent. difference between the lowest and the highest wages instead of the 30 per cent. variation which was found between the smallest and largest total amounts paid out weekly in wages and also between the average wage at different seasons.

Moreover, the wages of the three time workers fluctuate nearly as violently and correlate in the same way with the slack and busy seasons. (Chart VIII.) These three rate workers, Sadie and Rose and Antoinette, are supposed to be paid a definite sum each week. But the least and greatest wages they actually receive are $7.52 and $2.41, $8.50 and $5.34, $7.76 and $2. The percentages of difference between these sums are no less than 68, 37 and 74 per cent. While Sadie's weekly rate is $5.50 and her average weekly wage $5.47, only a trifle less, Rose never gets more than her rate of $8.50 and falls below it so often as to bring her average weekly wage down to $7.39, only seven-eighths as great. Antoinette has a rate of $7, but an actual weekly average of $5.92. She loses over a seventh of her rate. The method of payment, it appears, makes but little difference. Whether they are piece or time workers, the employees, through fluctuations in their wages, bear the brunt of seasonal variations. Under these conditions, the setting of a simple minimum wage rate without regard to unemployment would not necessarily produce a living wage.

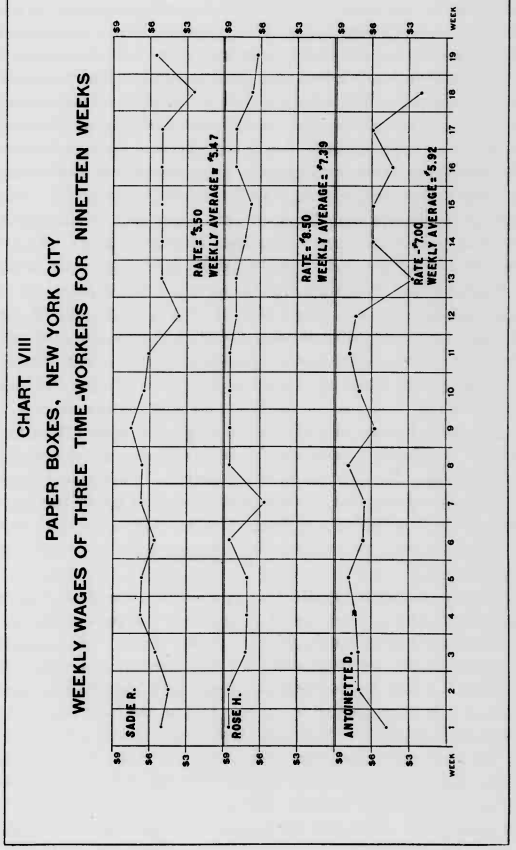
Overtime Earnings

It is sometimes stated that working girls make up by overtime what they lose by undertime. The lower level of average weekly earnings, when compared with rates as shown on the previous

CHART VIII

PAPER BOXES, NEW YORK CITY

WEEKLY WAGES OF THREE TIME-WORKERS FOR NINETEEN WEEKS



pages, is an indirect refutal of that often-heard remark: "Well, after all, they make up in the busy season what they lose in the dull," which argument is sometimes even used as a reason for not limiting women's hours of work. But all the direct evidence at hand, as well as the indirect, shows this belief to be erroneous.

It is unfortunately true that a good deal of overtime does exist for women paper box workers. But in the first place, waiving for the moment all question of the undesirability of overtime work under high pressure for women workers, it appears that the long hours which bring gains in wages are worked by a minority only. In a busy week in New York City in the fall of 1913, 258 of the women considered, or only 8 per cent. of the whole number, worked in excess of the legal number of hours. Forty-one, or only 1.2 per cent. worked all seven days of the week, while a larger number, 861 or 19.7 per cent., lost a day or more. It is apparent that for this group at least only a small part of the workers gained anything through overtime to help them through the slack season. While from the point of view of overtime work a comparatively small number of workers were affected, yet it is apparent that violations of the labor law were not uncommon.

The proportionate rise and fall in wages also must not be forgotten. In the dull season the fall is greater than the rise in the busy season. The New York State Factory Investigating Commission found that the average weekly wage of nearly two hundred women operatives, questioned as to seasonal wages, rose only 10 per cent. above the usual earnings, but dropped 23 per cent. below.

Finally, taking the entire year into account, the slack time is spread out over a much longer period than the rush. The proportions are approximately thirty to twenty weeks. This is quite consistent with the facts about the six "steady, representative workers" whose wages, week by week, have already been considered. It is reasonable to suppose that in the busy season the time workers would at least make their rate. But they fell below it far more often than they rose above it. Sadie was 7 weeks above her rate, 2 weeks at it and 10 weeks below. Rose received her rate only 7 times, never got above it and was below it 29 times. For Antoinette the figures are 5 weeks above her rate,

2 weeks at the rate and 16 weeks below the rate. Following the same line of reasoning, the piece-workers would be likely to go above their average wage in a busy week. Sarah did go above her average weekly wage 26 times and below only 23 times, but both the others fell below their average more often than they went above it. Ida was 23 weeks above and 26 weeks below, while Annie was 24 weeks above and 28 weeks below. In the selected group of time-workers, 94 per cent. had average weekly earnings below their rate, only 2½ per cent. had average weekly earnings above their rate and 3½ per cent. made their scheduled rate of pay. All the facts available, then, agree in showing that the idea of overtime "making up" for undertime is entirely misleading.

Summary

Looking back over the ground covered, the irregularity in the paper box industry, with the slack seasons in the summer and winter and busy seasons in the fall and spring, may best be realized by a study of the earnings. In contrast to the comparatively small 10 per cent. variation in the number employed at different seasons, we find a 30 per cent. fluctuation in wages, whether measured by averages or totals. The fluctuation in individual cases rises to 75 per cent. and over. In addition, wage gains do not equal wage losses, and the net result of seasonal irregularity is a loss in wages to the employee. The record of the wages of a few individual girls week by week shows, just as an extensive comparison of weekly rates with average weekly earnings shows, an actual income approximately 15 per cent. below the rate. The wage rate is only nominal, a term of little real meaning. These workers are not paid by the week but by the hour or rather by the minute, and in this way in the paper box industry, a casual, shifting group of workers, probably without half realizing it, bears the burden of seasonal irregularity.

THE CONFECTIONERY INDUSTRY

Introduction

From all statistics, it is evident that the American people are not losing their taste for sweets. The confectionery industry is a growing and prosperous one. At Christmas time, for instance, there are few homes in which the festivities are complete without some candy, and Easter time again swells the stream of buyers. While most people will recognize the truth of these statements, but few realize the effect of our fluctuating desire for sweets, determining as it does the occurrence of marked busy and dull seasons for thousands of workers. The majority of these workers are women and children under sixteen, many of them employed at less than a living wage. For this reason, this industry has frequently been the subject of investigations by minimum wage commissions in various parts of the country.

General Statistics

According to the latest United States Census of Manufactures, the average number of wage earners employed in the confectionery industry increased from 26,000 to 44,000, or 66 per cent. in the ten years between 1899 and 1909. Women over 16 formed over half of this labor force, nearly 26,000 as against 14,000 in 1899, an increase of no less than 79 per cent. in the decade. The number of men employed increased but 49 per cent. in the same time, and the number of children under 16, only 58 per cent. Women in this industry are, therefore, not only in the majority, but are also tending to displace other classes of employees. This is further evident from the fact that, while in 1899 men were 40 per cent. and women 53 per cent. of the whole number of wage earners, in 1909 the proportion of men had fallen to 35 per cent., but the proportion of women had risen to 58 per cent. The percentage of children under 16, the larger number of whom are girls, remained about the same, 6 per cent.

This increased proportion of women is due in part to a more extensive use of machines and a consequent need for a larger number of unskilled employees. For instance, a machine which automatically shapes the cream centers of bonbons and chocolates needs only one regulator and four or five helpers to do the work formerly done by thirty skilled men. In this way the number of women increases, for in the making of candy as in so many other industries the men perform the more highly skilled tasks and the women the simpler and more mechanical ones. Men do all the cooking and moulding of the different candy mixtures; whereas among the women the only skilled workers are the "dippers," who cover the centers of chocolates and bonbons. The majority, however, are employed as "wrappers" and "packers" and as "helpers" who fetch and carry for the rest.

New York has the largest number of women candy workers, 5,679 on December 15, 1909, according to the Census of Manufactures. Massachusetts comes second with 4,140. The other states employing more than a thousand women wage earners over sixteen years old are, in the order named, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri and Wisconsin.[1] In addition to the more detailed facts for Massachusetts and New York City, information has been secured from widely scattered points — from the states of California, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Oregon and Wisconsin and the cities of Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Kansas City.

Seasonal Variations

So many aspects does this industry present that it is even more difficult than usual to measure its irregularity. First, we find that during the four autumn months a much larger force of workers is used than can find places for the rest of the year. After Christmas, a good many employees are dismissed. At the

[1] CONFECTIONERY INDUSTRY

NUMBER OF WOMEN OVER 16 EMPLOYED DECEMBER 15, 1909

[United States Census of Manufactures, Vol. IX, Table II for each State]

New York	5,679	Missouri	1,350
Massachusetts	4,410	Wisconsin	1,087
Pennsylvania	3,839	All other States	9,735
Illinois	2,645		
Ohio	1,708	Total	30,453

same time the entire factory may close for a week or so, and in July this is still more likely to happen. Or perhaps the factory runs four or five days a week instead of the regular six. Many factories do not close as a whole, but different departments may close for a few days at a time through the dull season, according to the work on hand. Then too, the regular weekly schedule of hours is likely to be shorter in the slack than in the rush season, and often the actual hours worked are even less than these scheduled hours.

Statistics of Irregular Employment

In so complicated a situation many of the ordinary measures of irregularity fall short of showing the true state of affairs.

Here again, according to the "days in operation yearly" in Massachusetts, candy factories worked on the average 292 days out of a possible 305, in New Jersey, 297, in Pennsylvania, 300. From this one would think that a steady worker need miss comparatively little time. But when a single factory is taken, and just what the steady workers lose in the way of short time is shown, the inadequacy of these figures becomes clear. This may be illustrated by the detailed report of short time in one factory cited as typical by the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards. This establishment was shut down for two weeks in July and also on two separate occasions in May and two in June, losing five and a half days in this way. Thus during the year there would be a loss of 17½ working days, or according to the statistics of "days in operation yearly" 287½ days would be worked. But in addition no less than twenty-four times during the dull half of the year, that is, between January and July, from one to twenty-one departments were closed for from one to three days at a time, as work fluctuated. The least number of days lost in this way was five and a half in three different departments; the greatest number 28½ days in one department; the other losses ranged between these two amounts. The tables following give this loss of days by dates and departments. The entirely irregular way in which the days of unemployment occurred made it absolutely impossible for employees to make up the time and earnings thus lost by turning to other work. Since

some parts of the factory were running at each of these times, none of this considerable loss is disclosed under the statistics of "days in operation yearly," which are thus entirely inadequate as a measure of the extent of irregularity.

TABLE 3

CONFECTIONERY—MASSACHUSETTS, 1911

Irregularity of Employment in a Massachusetts Candy Factory, 1911

A. Dates, Numbers of Days and Number of Departments Closed, in Addition to a Shutdown of Two Weeks in July. (Total Number of Departments, 26)

(From report of the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, pages 64 and 65)

Date	Number days closed	Number departments closed	Date	Number days closed	Number departments closed
January 7	1	5	April 22	3	14
14	1	2	29	1	12
February 11	2	2	May 6	2	18
18	2	2	13	2	All employing women.
25	1	1	20	2	11
March 15	1	1	27	1½	All employing women.
18	2	2	June 3	1	All employing women.
25	2	4	4	1	3
April 1	2	14	10	1	8
8	2½	6	11	1	2
15	3 and 2	21	17	1	5
			25	1	All employing women.

B. Number of Days Each Department Was Closed

Department No.	Working days closed	Department No.	Working days closed	Department No.	Working days closed
1	9	10	24	19	7½
2	14	11	19	20	15
3	23	12	16	21	7½
4	19	13	28½	22	19
5	5½	14	5½	23	15½
6	6	15	20½	24	15
7	8½	16	18½	25	13
8	19	17	18½	26	5½
9	13	18	15		

Besides "days in operation yearly" the other common method of measuring seasonal irregularity is that of giving the "average number employed by months." We have these figures for the women workers in Massachusetts, 1912, New Jersey, 1912 and Wisconsin, 1909, and for all workers in New York City, and upstate, September, 1912–September, 1913. (See charts IX and X.) This last set of figures comes from the New York Commission; the others from state labor reports. In every case

CHART IX

CONFECTIONERY

AVERAGE NUMBER EMPLOYED BY MONTHS

(MAXIMUM = 100%)

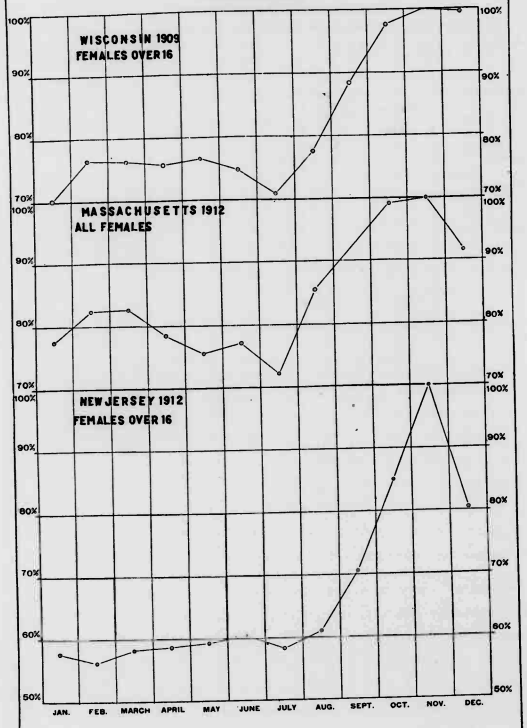
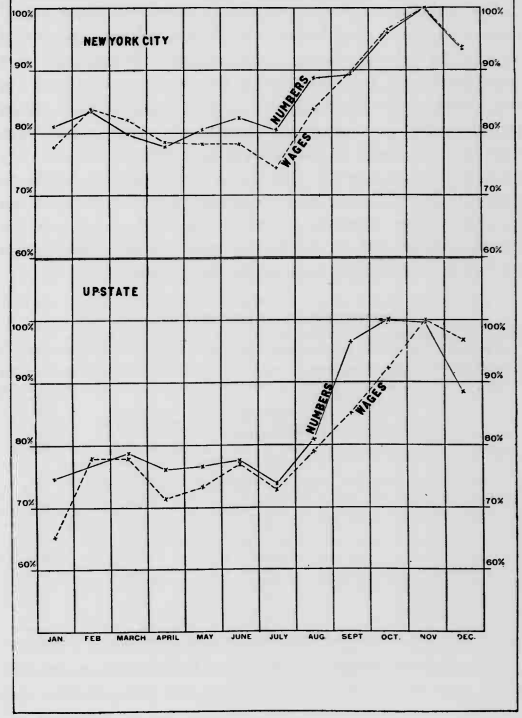


CHART X

CONFECTIONERY, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1912 - SEPTEMBER 1913

AVERAGE NUMBER EMPLOYED AND TOTAL AMOUNT WAGES BY MONTHS. MALE AND FEMALE

(MAXIMUM = 100%)



the year is the latest for which the figures are compiled. The percentage of difference between the largest and smallest number employed is nearly 45 per cent. in New Jersey, and about 25 per cent. in the three other states. This latter figure corresponds closely to the per cent. of difference in numbers employed in quite a different locality, Kansas City, where a maximum of 900 and minimum of 670 were found, a difference of just about 25 per cent.

The statistics of "average number employed by months" show, then, that a considerable part of the employees cannot find work in the industry during the entire year. Being totals for a large number of factories they do not, however, bring out the real extent of the fluctuations in certain establishments. Some factories hold their employees during the year much more steadily than others, as is disclosed by a table of the monthly fluctuations of numbers for the twelve largest factories in Massachusetts. In the factory least affected by seasonal differences, the smallest number employed in any month is 70 per cent. of the largest number, but in the factory most affected, the smallest number is only 22.7 per cent. of the largest number.

TABLE 4

CONFECTIONERY — MASSACHUSETTS, 1911

MONTHS WHEN MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBERS ARE EMPLOYED, AND SMALLEST PER CENT. OF MAXIMUM EMPLOYED IN THE TWELVE LARGEST CANDY FACTORIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

(Adapted from the Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, p. 67)

FACTORY NO.	Month when largest number were employed	Month when smallest number were employed	Per cent. smallest number is of largest number employed
1	Oct.	July	22.7
2	Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.	June, July, Aug.	70.0
3	Sept.	Nov.	67.7
4	Nov.	Jan.	55.7
5	Nov.	Jan.	55.2
6	Nov., Dec.	Jan.	56.8
7	Sept.	Feb.	60.1
8	July	Oct.	80.3
9	May	March	73.8
10	Oct.	July	43.3
11	Sept.	April	73.9
12	Oct.	Jan.	52.0

However, even though a woman can find a place on the payroll of some factory throughout the year, this does not mean that she does not lose time and money through slack work. As shown in the description of the irregularity of a typical Massachusetts factory, besides a probable closing of the factory for a week or two, the day lost here and there and the shorter daily working time — all decrease the hours she works and consequently her pay. Almost all steady workers do suffer from such losses. In Massachusetts, nearly 500 steady workers who remained in the same factory throughout the year, were questioned as to time lost. Ninety-five per cent. of them lost time from industrial causes during the year, missing an average of 20 entire working days or over 3 weeks — nearly 7 per cent. of their whole period of employment. The table following shows that the largest group lost between 25 and 30 entire days. Industrial conditions were reported responsible for three-quarters of all the time lost. Since wages always decrease with time lost, in this way alone, through the loss of entire days, the usual minimum wage rate would fail to provide these steady workers with a living wage by about 7 per cent. Moreover, this does not include the further extensive loss from short hours on days when but little work is done. The "average number employed by months" indicates, therefore, the extent to which workers cannot find a place in the industry for the entire year, but conceals differences between establishments and tells nothing as to the effect of seasonal irregularity on those workers who keep their places throughout the year.

TABLE 5

CONFECTIONERY — MASSACHUSETTS, 1911

NUMBER OF ENTIRE DAYS LOST BY "STEADY" WOMEN WORKERS THROUGH INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS

(Adapted from Report of the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, pp. 263–267)

NUMBER WORKING DAYS LOST	1–6	7–12	13–18	19–24	25–30	31–36	37–42	43–48	49–54	55–60	61–90	1–90	0
Number losing	50	56	67	84	122	49	15	6	5	1	1	456	23

SHIFTING

In New York City, in the year studied by the Factory Investigating Commission, September 1912 to September 1913, 45 per cent. of the women stayed four weeks or less in the same place and a total of 66 per cent. less than three months; 13 per cent.

remained from three to six months and 8.3 per cent. over six months and less than eleven months. Only 12 per cent. held their places over eleven months. (See Chart XI.) In Massachusetts in 1913-14, the Minimum Wage Commission found the number of months during which over 3,000 women in the fourteen largest factories had remained in the same establishment. All those leaving in less than four weeks were excluded and, considering the large numbers who leave after a few days' work, the showing is, in this way, made much more favorable. Even so, 36.9 per cent. stayed less than three months and only 21.8 per cent. more than eleven months. Twenty-three and a half per cent. remained three to six months and 17.8 per cent. from six to eleven months. An almost negligible percentage of the entire number found employment for the entire twelve months.

There were, however, great differences between the different factories in respect to the steadiness of their employees. One establishment held 16 per cent. of its workers for the whole twelve months, whereas four kept no workers at all throughout the entire year. Those finding work for eleven months varied from 12 per cent. to over 70 per cent. By occupations the differences were not so marked. The skilled dippers were most permanent in tenure, as might be expected, and the absolutely unskilled floor-girls the least, but in general the different occupations ran pretty closely together.

Like evidence, though from a slightly different point of view, comes from the results of a federal investigation made in 1911 in the two widely separated states of Maryland and California. The average number of weeks' employment yearly for all women candy workers was thirty-nine in the one state and forty-five in the other. Allowing for the fact that some of these workers must have been steady throughout the year, many others must have been able to find work for very short periods only.

Those who are dismissed on account of the slack season must find it especially difficult to obtain other work, since they lose their places after Christmas and in the summer, when most other women's trades are dull. And in Massachusetts, in 1911, out of about 850 such changes from factory to factory, 22 per cent. were said by the women changing to have been made on account of slack work.

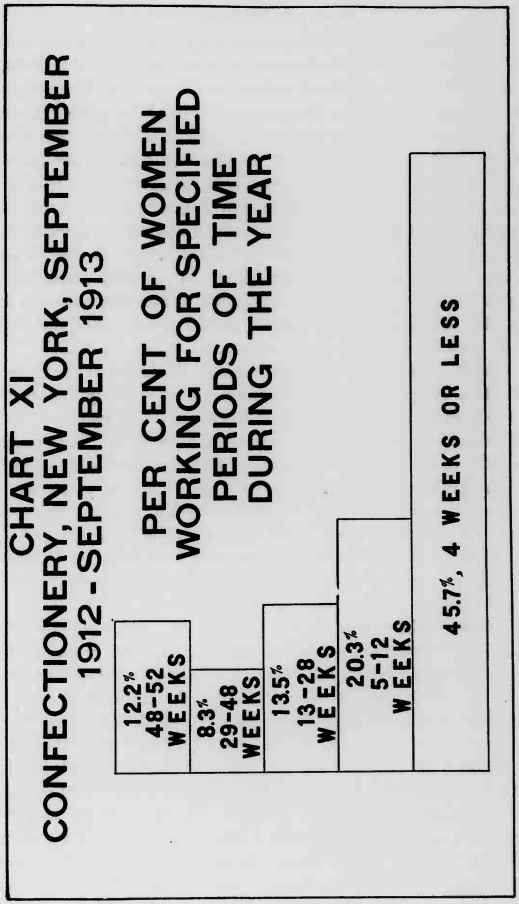


CHART XI
CONFECTIONERY, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 1912 - SEPTEMBER 1913
PER CENT OF WOMEN WORKING FOR SPECIFIED PERIODS OF TIME DURING THE YEAR
12.2% 48-52 WEEKS
8.3% 29-48 WEEKS
13.5% 13-28 WEEKS
20.3% 5-12 WEEKS
45.7%, 4 WEEKS OR LESS

Variation in Earnings

The effect of irregular employment upon income remains to be considered. How much do steady workers lose on account of dull seasons? Do short period workers also lose? Do time-workers succeed in making their nominal rate of pay? In comparing the fluctuations in the total amount of wages paid out in New York City, 1912–13, the percentage of difference between the largest and smallest amounts by months is but slightly larger than the monthly percentage of difference in numbers, 25 per cent. for wages and 23 per cent. for numbers. But when we examine the total sums paid out each week, we find a difference of over 35 per cent. between maximum and minimum, a variation considerably greater than the 25 per cent. difference in numbers employed by weeks. Slack work must account for the periods when the wage line dips far below the line for numbers. (See Chart X.)

In Massachusetts, the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards made a study of losses in earnings among "steady" workers. The average weekly earnings of 469 women who remained with the same firm the entire year were found to be $5.33. The average weekly earnings for those weeks in which they worked was $5.97. Thus allowance was made for all absences for an entire week, though not for losses from short time within a week. But even this average weekly loss of 64 cents, excluding as it did part of the loss from seasonal irregularity, was more than 10 per cent. of the average weekly income. This loss was produced "largely by industrial causes" says the Commission.

Most of the women employees in candy factories are time workers. This does not mean, however, that such workers who keep their places during the slack season really make their nominal weekly rate during that time. To illustrate this point the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board selected a single wage sheet from one pay roll. It was a "typical sheet" selected at random and contained the names of forty-three time workers, at work for the factory an average of forty weeks during the year. That is, they were comparatively steady workers. On the average, they received their scheduled rate just a quarter of the time or ten weeks out of the forty. Their average exceeded the rate nine times and fell below it twenty-one times. Not one received her rate for

half the time she worked, or earned more than her rate as often as she earned less. In every case the actual average earnings of these women if computed would have fallen below their rate. Both the report of the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission and the New York State Factory Investigating Commission compare rates and earnings for women in the confectionery industry in 1913, and both show earnings falling below the rates, though the New York report took a week in the "normal" or busier season and the Massachusetts report considered average weekly earnings for the year. In New York City in the selected week only 19 per cent. of the women were working at a rate of under $5, but 30 per cent. actually took home such amounts in their pay envelopes. In Massachusetts for the whole year 26 per cent. were rated under $5, but 49 per cent. actually earned such a sum. (See Chart XII.)

A comparison between the possible hours based on full running time, and the hours actually worked by 1,115 female time-workers in three Massachusetts candy-factories during 1913, illustrates the conditions probably responsible for this discrepancy. (See Chart XIII.) In the first place the running time of the factories varies considerably from season to season, falling off in the summer and rising high before Christmas as the solid line shows. There are two different reasons for this variation; both illustrative of different phases of industrial irregularity. The one is the great increase in the number employed during the busy season; the other, the lengthening of the running time ten or fifteen per cent. at the same period. But in only two or three weeks during the busy season when overtime is undoubtedly worked, do the hours of actual work (represented by the broken line), exceed or even so much as equal this changing running time. For all the rest of the year hours worked fall decidedly below possible hours. Such a difference between actual and possible hours of work is found among all classes of employees, the skilled dippers and "fancy packers" as well as among the unskilled "plain packers." (See Chart XIV.) It is true that a better organization of the industry would require a somewhat smaller labor-force and a few women would thus be thrown entirely out of work if actual hours more nearly equalled possible hours. On the other hand full time

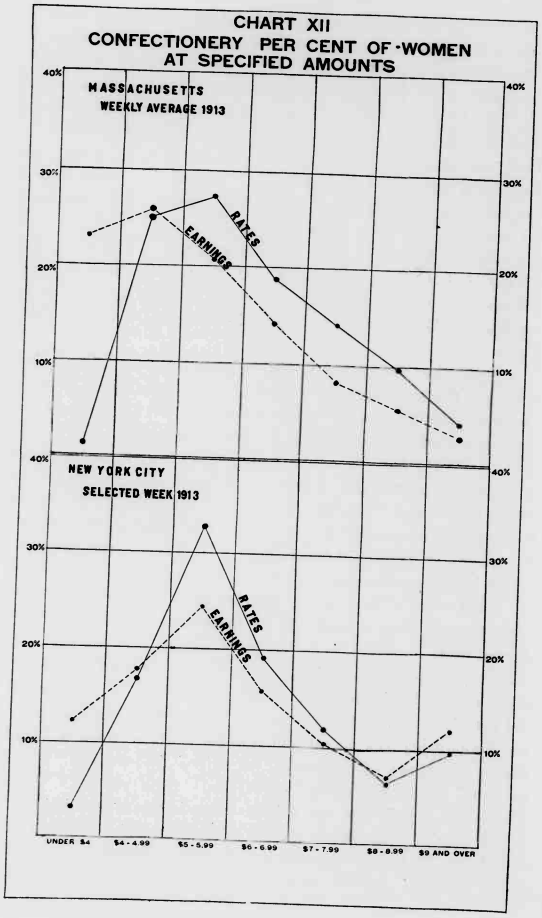


CHART XII
CONFECTIONERY PER CENT OF WOMEN AT SPECIFIED AMOUNTS
MASSACHUSETTS
WEEKLY AVERAGE 1913
RATES
EARNINGS
NEW YORK CITY
SELECTED WEEK 1913
RATES
EARNINGS
40%
30%
20%
10%
UNDER $4
$4 - 4.99
$5 - 5.99
$6 - 6.99
$7 - 7.99
$8 - 8.99
$9 AND OVER

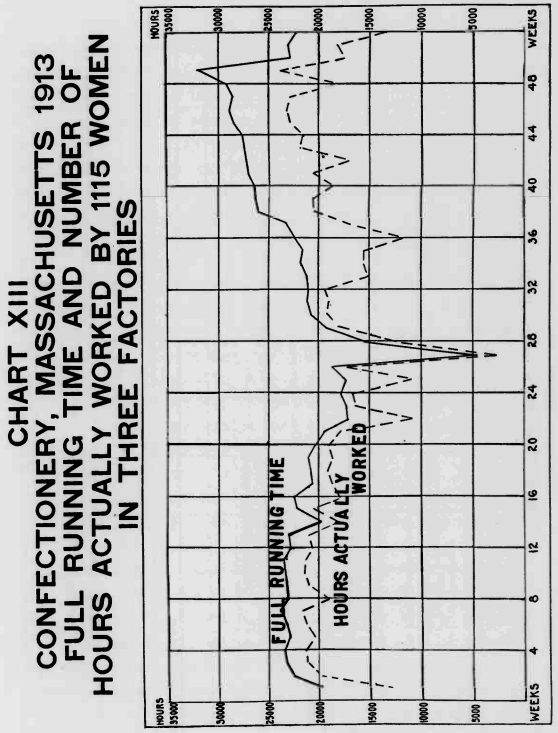
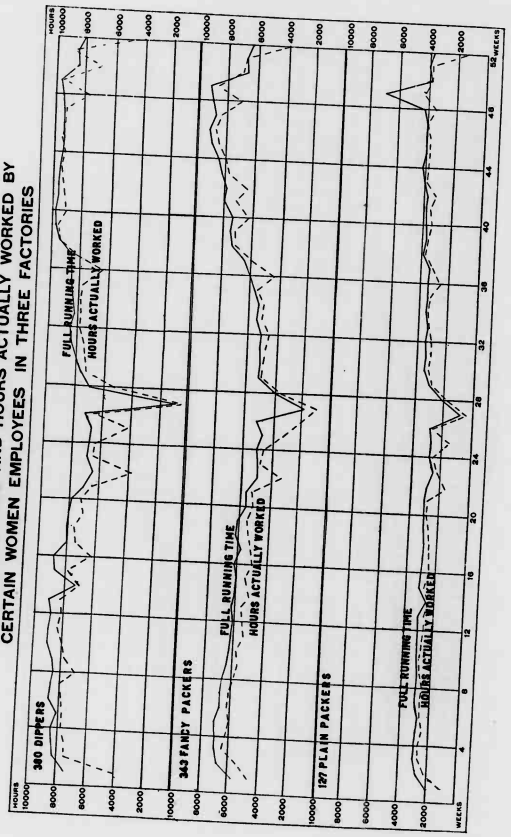


CHART XIII
CONFECTIONERY, MASSACHUSETTS 1913
FULL RUNNING TIME AND NUMBER OF HOURS ACTUALLY WORKED BY 1115 WOMEN IN THREE FACTORIES
HOURS
WEEKS
FULL RUNNING TIME
HOURS ACTUALLY WORKED
35000
30000
25000
20000
15000
10000
5000
4
8
12
16
20
24
28
32
36
40
44
48

CHART XIV
CONFECTIONERY, MASSACHUSETTS 1913
FULL RUNNING TIME AND HOURS ACTUALLY WORKED BY CERTAIN WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN THREE FACTORIES



employment would be given to the majority of the workers, which would seem to be the more desirable policy from all points of view, for it is better for a few to be forced to look for other employment, rather than to allow the whole force to drag on under-employed and with reduced earnings. The existing situation makes it evident that rates or running time can not at present be considered a reliable index to actual earnings.

A special study of rates and earnings was made which included every New York City candy factory which kept records of the weekly rate of wages and actual weekly earnings of their women workers. The rate-workers selected in this way were far above the average, and included only the best factories, the steadier workers, and in addition excluded a certain amount of unemployment. (See "Paper Box Industry," p. 536.) Yet in almost every case earnings were found to be below the scheduled rate.

This group consisted of 1,063 time workers, the earnings of 953 or 89.7 per cent. of this number fell below their rate of wages, while for only 18 were earnings and rates equal, and 92 received earnings higher than their rate of wages. Sixty-three and four tenths per cent. of the 953 women who suffered a loss in earnings, lost more than 10 per cent. of their rate; 18.8 per cent. lost from 11 per cent. to 15 per cent.; 25.3 per cent. lost from 16 per cent. to 25 per cent.; and 19.3 per cent., nearly a fifth, lost over a quarter of their supposed income. There are only slight differences in the severity of the losses suffered by the high and by the low paid workers.

Of those earning under $5, 72.1% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $5–$5.99, 62.3% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $6–$6.99, 59.5% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $7–$7.99, 57.4% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $8–$8.99, 57.4% lost over 10% of wages.
Of those earning $9 and over, 66.3% lost over 10% of wages.

But many of the women who stayed only a short time in the same factory lost more heavily than did the more permanent workers.

Of those staying 1–4 weeks in same factory, 84.1% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 5–13 weeks in same factory, 71.2% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 14–26 weeks in same factory, 48.2% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 27–47 weeks in same factory, 61.2% lost over 10% of wages.

Of those staying 48–52 weeks in same factory, 44.7% lost over 10% of wages.

TABLE 6

CONFECTIONERY — NEW YORK CITY, SEPTEMBER, 1912–1913

SELECTED FEMALE TIME WORKERS OVER 16. COMPARISON OF RATE OF PAY AND ACTUAL AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

1A. NUMBER LOSING GIVEN PERCENTAGE OF THEIR RATE, BY WAGE GROUPS

RATE	PERCENTAGE LOST					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
Under $5 00	22	31	35	48	54	190
$5 00– 5 99	59	65	58	74	59	305
6 00– 6 99	42	58	44	56	47	247
7 00– 7 99	21	16	17	26	9	89
8 00– 8 99	11	8	6	16	4	45
9 00 and over	16	10	19	21	11	77
Total	161	188	179	241	184	953

1B. PER CENT. LOSING GIVEN PERCENTAGES OF THEIR RATE, BY WAGE GROUPS.

RATE	PERCENTAGE LOST					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
Under $5 00	11.6	16.3	18.4	25.3	28.4	100.0
$5 00– 5 99	16.1	21.3	19.0	24.2	19.1	100.0
6 00– 6 99	17.0	23.5	17.9	22.6	19.0	100.0
7 00– 7 99	23.5	17.9	18.1	29.2	10.1	100.0
8 00– 8 99	24.4	17.8	13.3	35.5	8.9	100.0
9 00 and over	20.8	12.9	24.7	27.3	14.3	100.0
Total	16.9	19.7	18.8	25.3	19.3	100.0

2A. NUMBERS LOSING GIVEN PERCENTAGES OF THEIR RATE, BY LENGTH OF TIME IN SAME FACTORY

LENGTH OF TIME IN SAME FACTORY	PERCENTAGE LOST					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
1– 4 weeks	15	20	21	44	121	221
5–13 weeks	31	35	48	74	45	233
14–26 weeks	25	35	14	36	6	116
27–47 weeks	19	36	41	37	9	142
48–52 weeks	71	62	55	50	3	241
Total	161	188	179	241	184	953

2B. PER CENT. LOSING GIVEN PERCENTAGES OF THEIR RATE, BY LENGTH OF TIME IN SAME FACTORY

LENGTH OF TIME IN SAME FACTORY	PERCENTAGE LOST					
	5 per cent. or less	6–10 per cent.	11–15 per cent.	16–25 per cent.	Over 25 per cent.	Total
1– 4 weeks	6.7	9.0	9.5	19.9	54.7	100.0
5–13 weeks	13.3	15.0	20.6	31.3	19.3	100.0
14–26 weeks	21.5	30.2	12.0	31.0	5.2	100.0
27–47 weeks	13.4	25.3	28.9	26.0	6.3	100.0
48–52 weeks	29.4	25.7	22.8	20.7	1.2	100.0
Total	16.9	19.7	18.8	25.3	19.3	100.0

Only 12 of the 92 women whose average weekly earnings exceeded their rate, gained more than 10 per cent. Fifty-three or over half gained 5 per cent. or less, and 27 gained between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. Not only did far fewer women gain than lose, but the gains were not so great as the losses. The gains fell with about equal frequency among the different wage groups, but the short period workers were the group more often found to gain, probably because more of them are at work only through the busy season.

We find therefore these steadier workers in the better factories suffering at the most conservative estimate losses which average 15 per cent. from their nominal rate of pay. Undoubtedly the loss of other women in the trade would be much greater. Unless the seasonal irregularity of the industry were overcome, or wage-

CHART XV

CONFECTIONERY, NEW YORK CITY

WEEKLY WAGES OF THREE PIECE-WORKERS

FOR A YEAR. AVERAGED BY MONTHS

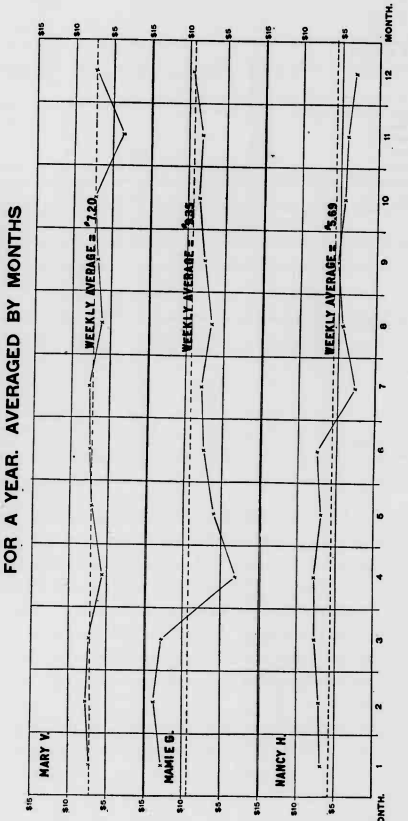
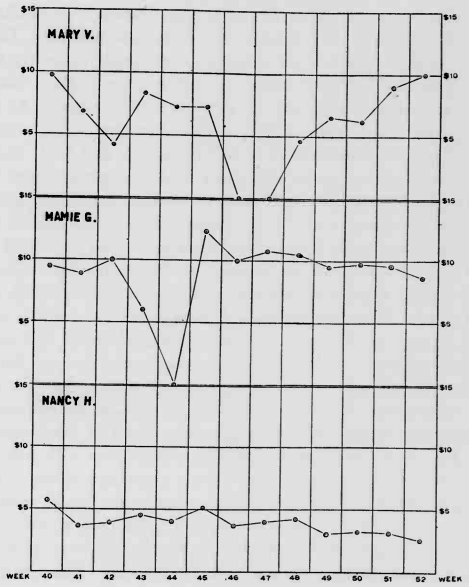


CHART XVI

CONFECTIONERY NEW YORK CITY,

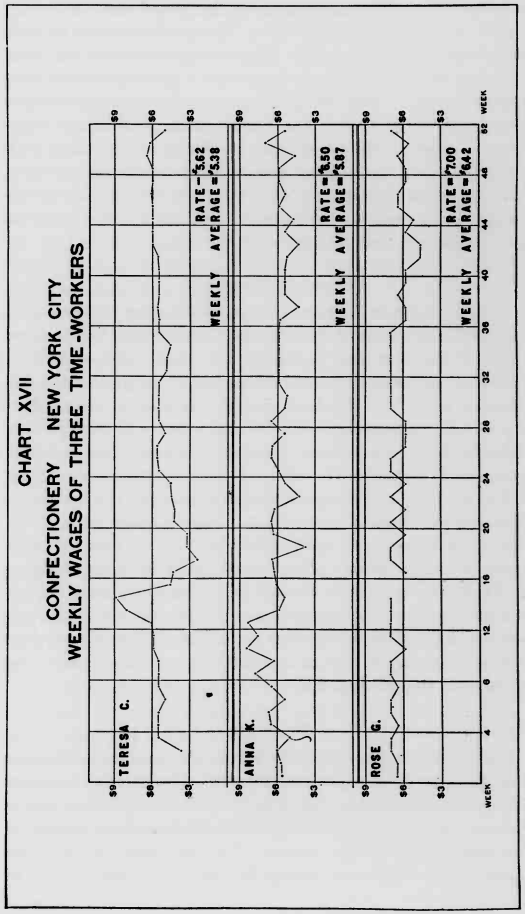
WEEKLY WAGES OF THREE PIECE-WORKERS

FOR THREE MONTHS



losses from irregular work are compensated in some way, therefore, how can we but question the effectiveness of insuring the women in it a living income by the usual minimum wage rate?

But in any average or aggregate extreme differences are smoothed down and the greater fluctuations disappear. If we want to realize the human side of the problem, how individual girls are affected by these wage differences, we must select individual workers and find out what they get week by week. As was done in the section on the Paper Box Industry, six workers were chosen, three piece workers and three time workers. They were "steady representative workers," each employed nearly the whole year in different factories. The three piece workers, Mary and Nancy and Mamie had an average weekly wage of $7.10, $5.69, and $9.35, respectively. These averages conceal great differences from week to week as the Charts (XV and XVI) show. The first chart represents each girl's weekly wages averaged by months; the second, her wages week by week for the third quarter of the year (which is not highly irregular) in order to show the fluctuations concealed by a monthly average. Mary received as little as $4.20 one week and as much as $10.01 another. Nancy received only fifty cents one week. The next week she did not work at all. However, excluding this as possibly caused by personal reasons, another week she made $2.91, while her best week she received $8.79. Mamie's weekly wage varied between $3.27 and $14.37. Instead of the average 35 per cent. difference, we have 58 per cent., 66 per cent. and 72 per cent., as the difference between the largest and smallest weekly wages of these steady workers. The surprising fact to those unfamiliar with present day factory work, is that nearly as great a variation occurs in the wages of the three time workers as among the piece workers (see Chart XVII). Teresa is supposed to be paid $5.62 every week in the year. In reality, her highest weekly wage is $8.90 and her lowest $2.44, a difference of 72 per cent. Rose's rate is $7. She never gets more than this, but for two or three weeks, her actual wage falls as low as $4.67, just about a third below her rate. Anna with a rate of $6.50, gets a minimum of $3.79 and a maximum of $8.45, more than twice as much. Not one of the three "makes up in the busy season what she loses in the dull"



as we are often told most workers do, for in each case the average weekly wage falls below the rate. Teresa drops below her rate an average of 24 cents weekly, Rose 58 cents, and Anna 63 cents. The average percentages lost weekly are 4 per cent., 8 per cent. and 9 per cent. Similar conditions among individual workers were found by the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards. They considered the case of "Bridget G" typical. She was 26 years old and had wrapped candy for one firm nearly seven years. Her weekly rate was $6, but in 1911 industrial lay-offs brought her average weekly wage down to only $4.97, a loss from her meager full time earnings of 17 per cent.

Overtime Earnings

It is already evident from the constant deficit in earnings when compared with rates that the steady worker does not find her "gains from overtime" equalling her losses from undertime. There are two reasons for this. The first is simply that the dull season is longer than the busy one. A glance at the charts showing monthly changes in numbers and wages will confirm this. Roughly from these charts, the proportions of slack and rush work are 33 weeks to 17 weeks. Then also rate-workers always fall below their rate many more weeks than they climb above it. For instance, Teresa, one of those "representative workers" in New York City was 36 weeks below her rate and only 14 weeks above it. In the second place, not all employees work overtime; in California in 1911, a quarter of the candy workers did not and in Maryland in the same year a fifth did not. All facts point to the conclusion that it is not so easy to "gain from overtime and make up for the slack season," even if the necessary long hours were thought desirable.

Summary

Busy and dull seasons alternate in candy factories in the same way that they do in paper box factories. The industry is busiest in the fall, active before Easter and slack after Christmas and in the summer. On account of these seasonal variations, at least 25 per cent. of the whole number of women employed can find places in the trade only during the four fall months. Part of

the great flux of workers in the industry, therefore, is not the fault of the workers themselves The steady workers also lose in time and consequently in wages during the dull season, both through shorter hours and through the occasional closing of a department or the whole factory for a few days. These losses in wages can be brought out in several different ways. There is a 35 per cent. variation in wages week by week in New York in contrast to a 25 per cent. fluctuation in numbers. In individual cases the difference rises as high as 75 per cent. These fluctuations result in wage losses. A comparison between the average weekly rate and earnings of over a thousand rate workers in New York City show that 89 per cent. of them did not make their rate and that their average loss was about 15 per cent. The same state of affairs was found to exist among "annual" workers and among women employed for shorter periods in Massachusetts.

The Minimum Wage Commission of that State has described a typical worker as "less than 25 years old, earns less than $6 a week; works on an average less than 46 hours weekly, and is out of work twenty or more weeks during the year."

We can come therefore to but one conclusion about a minimum wage in the confectionery industry. In view of the seasonal nature of the industry, a minimum flat rate without regard to the amount of employment will never give the girl in the candy factory a living wage. Yet large numbers of them look to this industry alone for their support. The Massachusetts Commission, for example, reports that in spite of its irregularity, 68 per cent out of 900 workers questioned depended entirely on this one industry for a living. Nor can those girls who hold their places in the slack season well do otherwise, with the slack periods so scattered as they are, a day here and a day there; while, as has been said, the casual workers, dismissed after Christmas, have to hunt for work in a time when most other industries are also slack. A minimum wage in this industry, to give the women a "living income" must either build on a basis of greater regularity than exists at present, or make an adequate allowance for the losses from seasonal irregularity.

CLOTHING

Introduction

The seasonal irregularity of the various "needle trades" is notorious. For this irregularity, it is hard to say whether we should hold climate or human nature responsible. We naturally need different clothing for winter and summer. At the same time the custom of "something new for Easter" and the ever changing styles, especially in woman's clothing, tend to increase the concentration of retail trade in two short seasons, spring and fall.

Years ago retail buyers placed their orders for goods a long time before the selling season, and manufacturers, too, made up goods for stock, expecting to get orders when the season came around. This kept the employees at work the greater part of the time. Recently, however, the custom has become more and more prevalent for buyers to place their orders just before the selling season and frequently in smaller lots, at periods during the height of the season. Quick delivery is always expected. This produces a short rush season of overtime and overwork and then a long period of slack time with little or no work. A great number of women are affected by this extreme irregularity, for the "needle trades" are well to the front among industries employing women.

That all garment workers alike suffer from this cause is evident from the statistics of unemployment among union members in Massachusetts and New York. In Massachusetts the percentage out of work on the last day of each quarter is reported. This percentage, for the years 1910-12, averaged 9.2 per cent. at the end of the first quarter, 11.7 per cent. at the end of the second, 20.1 per cent. at the end of the third, and 38.7 per cent. at the end of the fourth. The general average for the three years was 19.9 per cent.

The New York figures for the same years run perhaps a little lower, but they are taken for the end of March and the end of September, when the trade dullness is by no means at its worst. Figures are also given to show that approximately 95 per cent.

of all the unemployment in this industry in New York state is caused by slack work. For women union members, the average number of days employed quarterly in the first and third quarters of a year, is also given. The full number of working days in a quarter is about 75, but from 1910 to 1912, these women averaged only from 39 to 64 days of work in a quarter, while 55 days is a representative figure for a general average. Roughly speaking they lost not far from a quarter of their time.

While idleness on account of trade conditions, therefore, is a burden to all garment workers, there is some difference in conditions between work on men's and women's clothing. The former includes the figures for such articles as bath-robes, raincoats and smoking jackets, staple lines for which the demand varies little and which can be made for stock if necessary. The workers on these goods are therefore little troubled by seasonal differences, and this fact, together with a somewhat more steady demand without very sharp changes in style, causes somewhat less irregularity in the manufacture of men's clothing than women's. On this account the two divisions of the trade are considered separately.

MEN'S CLOTHING

General Statistics

Few factory industries employ more women than does the manufacture of men's clothing. An average of 133,101 women, 16 years of age and over, were at work in this line in 1909, according to the United States Census of Manufactures. Ten years before the number had been only 99,000. Though the male workers were increasing somewhat more rapidly than the female and the proportion of women was therefore slightly decreasing, yet the women were still in the majority, forming 55 per cent. of all wage earners. The states employing the largest numbers of women workers on December 15, 1909, were New York with 40,000, Illinois with 19,000, Pennsylvania with 16,000 and Maryland with 10,000. Other States employing over 2,000 adult women were Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio and Wisconsin. New York held decidedly the first place, but the industry was fairly well scattered over the leading manufacturing states.

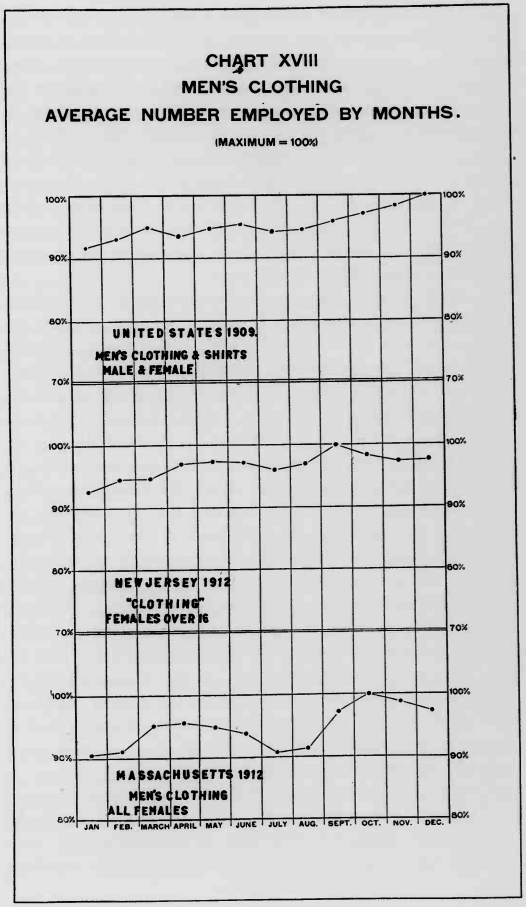
Seasonal Variations

For the most part the fluctuations in the trade follow the familiar course of busy in the fall and in the spring, dull after Christmas and in the summer. On the whole, the spring busy season is more active and lasts longer than in many other trades with a correspondingly later and slighter rush in the fall. In a few localities, as Philadelphia and Baltimore, the first half of the year is a good deal busier than the last half. In Kentucky in 1911, the "Commission on the Condition of Working Women" found that at least three months a year were slack. Some employees are discharged as the slack season comes on, the rest work short hours, and on many days find the shop closed entirely, so that their earnings fall off.

Sarah M. may represent the unlucky ones whom the industry cannot use all the year. She had been earning only $3.50 a week, and then one day work was slack and her employer turned her off. For three months she could not get work. "She had saved $6 and that partly paid for a place to sleep with a family about as poor as she was. She had lived for weeks on two cents worth of bread a day and a little tea, and after three months of this seemed surprised that she had 'queer feelings in the stomach' and palpitation of the heart. Her landlady sometimes cooked a supper for her, charging only 10 cents, which barely covered the cost of the food, did her washing, and helped her in every way she could."[1] Thus by the kindness of the poor to the poor were the vicissitudes of seasonal industry endured.

The case of Esther G.[2] illustrates the troubles of the worker who is not discharged outright in the slack season. But at that time she could get only enough work to bring her average weekly earnings of $1.96. This did not pay her expenses, so "her landlady trusted her for her room rent, she used what little money she had to buy food, and when the busy season came again began to pay off the burden of debt which she had accumulated."

[1] Women and Child Wage Earners, Vol. V., p. 67.
[2] Ibid.



Statistics of Irregular Employment

In the clothing trade the "average number of days in operation yearly" are somewhat more significant of the actual situation than usual because of the many days when the factories are entirely closed. In 1912, the average days in operation in Massachusetts was only 273 and in New Jersey, 233. That is, in Massachusetts the steady workers lost some 10 per cent. of their time from the closing of the whole factory for entire days and in New Jersey they lost nearly a quarter of their time in this way. Their full time earnings would be reduced proportionately from this one factor alone without allowing for all the short time on days when a little work is done.

Variations in the "average number employed by months" have been given for the whole United States in 1909 and for Massachusetts and New Jersey in 1912. (See Chart XVIII.) The differences are not extreme, about 10 per cent. at the most, though half of this difference or 5 per cent. can find places for only three months out of the year. In this industry, the busy and slack seasons may not come at the same part of the year in different localities and different sorts of shops, and whenever this happens, the average smooths down the differences. This is often the case, as the diagram shows, for the variations in New Jersey do not correspond with those of the United States as a whole. Some figures from a federal report on the industry make this still more evident. The five leading centers for the trade are considered, New York, Chicago, Rochester, Philadelphia and Baltimore, where altogether 68.2 per cent. of the men's clothing manufactured in the United States was turned out in 1909. Though according to the dates of the week when fewest and the week when most were employed the general tendency toward slack work in the summer and after Christmas and a busy season in the spring and late fall was clear, yet there was considerable variation between the different cities.

Still more striking are the differences in steadiness of numbers employed between the various cities and the various kinds of shops. (See Table 7.) The basis of comparison here used is the per cent. which the maximum and minimum numbers

form of the average number employed, instead of, as in other schedules, the per cent. which the smallest monthly average is of the greatest. In cities, Rochester, with only 16 per cent. difference between this smallest and largest per cent. of the average number employed, forced less unemployment on its workers than Philadelphia with its difference of 29 per cent., and far less than Baltimore with its difference of 54 per cent. Since percentages are given for only one shop in New York, no general deductions can be made for that city. In Kentucky, the Commission on the Condition of Working Women found a 50 per cent. difference in 1911 between the numbers in the busy and in the slack season. This greater steadiness of the trade in Rochester is probably due to the fact that the "inside" shop prevails there, that is, the large factory where a single firm controls the manufacture from beginning to end.

Regularity of work in the different kinds of shops may be compared from the Chicago figures. In the "inside shops," the difference between the largest and smallest number employed was only 8 per cent., a result similar to the general averages. But in two "contract shops," where a contractor has the clothing made up which he gets from an entrepreneur, the differences were naturally much greater, 17 per cent. and 32 per cent. Three "special order" shops were investigated, two in Chicago and one in New York. In a "special order shop" suits are made to individual measure, but under factory conditions. Such a shop is the link between custom tailoring and ready made clothing. Since work is done as the orders happen to come in, the irregularity there was greatest of all. In the two Chicago shops, the fluctuations were 51 per cent. and 90 per cent., and in the one in New York City the difference was 73 per cent. In these last two shops more than half of the workers must have been thrown out of employment for a part of the year. This is quite a different story from the 10 per cent. of the general average, and goes to show once more how such averages may cover up the real conditions.

TABLE 7

MEN'S CLOTHING — FIVE LEADING CENTERS OF THE INDUSTRY, 1907-8

FLUCTUATIONS IN NUMBERS EMPLOYED, WEEKLY PAYROLL AND AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

(Adapted from Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. II, pp. 174–179)

KIND OF SHOP	PER CENT. OF AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES		PER CENT. OF AVERAGE WEEKLY PAYROLL		PER CENT. OF AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS	
	Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest	Smallest	Largest
I. CHICAGO						
Large inside shops	95.3	103.6	85.9	112.9	85.0	112.5
"Contract vest shop," Scandinavian	88.6	120.0	67.5	112.6	76.2	112.3
"Contract coat shop," Bohemian	87.5	104.2	74.5	123.9	71.6	123.6
"Contract coat shop," German	.....	.....	56.5	135.9	.....	.....
Ready-made clothing	95.3	103.6	85.9	116.3	85.0	112.5
"Special order shop"	74.2	125.8	42.6	166.7	29.7	171.9
"Special order shop"	28.8	118.0	47.8	128.0	25.2	146.4
II. ROCHESTER						
All	93.8	109.9	92.3	112.2	98.4	104.2
III. PHILADELPHIA						
All	79.1	108.4	47.2	125.2	54.3	117.6
IV. BALTIMORE						
All	72.1	126.6	55.6	131.3	63.4	118.6
V. NEW YORK CITY						
"Special order shop"	52.2	125.8	32.1	158.2	55.1	138.0
"Inside contract shop"	.....	.....	63.6	117.7	.....	.....

Besides the entire closing of the shops, brought out by the statistics of "days in operation" and the smaller numbers employed in the busy season, shown by the "number employed by months," there is the whole question of short-time which is much more common than might be thought. The government investigation already referred to computed for a "representative week" the average weekly hours actually worked and the actual average weekly pay and compared the results with full time hours and full time rates of pay. (See Table 8-a.) The percentage of loss in hours and that of loss in wages is almost identical and forms one more proof of the absolute dependence of factory-workers' wages on the number of hours they work. There was a decided loss from full time hours and full time rates of pay in every city, varying from about 10 per cent. in Rochester to more than 20 per cent. in Baltimore — and it must be remembered that this

period is supposed to be a "normal week"— rather busy than dull. Once more we can see the ineffectiveness of a wage-rate as a measurement of the actual pay received. Furthermore, there was absolutely no uniformity about the weekly hours that different women worked. (See Table 8-b.) In Chicago, in this same "representative week," 7 per cent. of the women worked overtime, but 41 per cent. less than full time. In one establishment of that particularly irregular type, the "special order house," over a quarter of the women worked overtime yet nearly a third worked less than three days in the selected week. It is impossible then under present conditions of irregularity to assume that all the workers will gain from possible overtime at busy seasons or will be able to reach any one level of wages.

TABLE 8

MEN'S CLOTHING — FIVE LEADING CENTERS OF THE INDUSTRY, 1907-8

A. FULL-TIME AND ACTUAL WORKING TIME, FULL-TIME WAGES AND ACTUAL AVERAGE WAGES IN A "REPRESENTATIVE WEEK." WOMEN 16 AND OVER

(Adapted from "Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. II, pp. 107, 125 and 161)

CITY	Average regular weekly hours	Average hours actually worked during week	Per cent. time lost during week	Per cent. wages lost during week	Computed full time earnings	Average actual weekly earnings for the week
Rochester	54.6	49.2	9.7	9.8	$7 68	$6 93
Chicago	54.3	48.4	10.9	11.0	8 03	7 15
New York	57.2	49.9	12.7	12.6	6 57	5 74
Philadelphia	54.6	47.4	13.2	12.9	6 89	6 00
Baltimore	57.7	45.8	20.6	20.6	6 07	4 82

B. PER CENT. OF WOMEN IN CHICAGO, 1907-8, WORKING OVERTIME, FULL-TIME, AND SPECIFIED NUMBERS OF DAYS PER WEEK IN A "REPRESENTATIVE WEEK." WOMEN 16 AND OVER

(Adapted from "Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. II, pp. 110–112)

KIND OF SHOP	Overtime	Full time	5 days—full time	3–5 days	Less than 3 days
All	7.5	50.8	11.7	20.9	9.1
"Special order" shop	27.1	11.3	2.2	28.1	31.3
"Ready-Made" establishment	3.4	59.0	13.8	19.1	4.7

SHIFTING

This same federal report finds that only 18 per cent. of the workers stayed in the factories investigated for a whole year. (See Table 9.) Sixteen per cent. remained from fifteen to thirty weeks, and the same proportion from thirty to fifty weeks, 20 per cent. from five to fourteen weeks, and 28 per cent.

less than five weeks. Workers remained longest in Rochester, then Philadelphia, Chicago and Baltimore followed in the order named. These cities have the same rank in variations in the numbers employed. It seems probable, therefore, that many workers, after a few weeks' work were forced out of the garment trade into other work or into unemployment.

TABLE 9
MEN'S CLOTHING — FIVE LEADING CENTERS OF THE INDUSTRY, 1907–8
PER CENT. OF EMPLOYEES REMAINING GIVEN NUMBERS OF WEEKS IN THE SAME FACTORY
(From Woman and Child Wage-Earners, Vol. II, p. 166)

NUMBER OF WEEKS IN SAME FACTORY	Rochester	Philadelphia	Chicago	Baltimore	Total
Under 5	11.8	17.3	34.9	38.2	28.2
5–14	17.8	21.8	21.4	20.2	20.6
15–29	13.7	21.6	16.1	16.9	16.9
30–49	22.4	17.4	13.6	15.3	16.0
50 and over	34.3	21.9	14.0	9.4	18.3

VARIATION IN EARNINGS

Finally we come to the more important point, the effect of this seasonal irregularity upon earnings. For such wage fluctuations, though we have no one general set of figures, yet we have a few for the different kinds of shops in the leading cities of the trade, figures which are comparable to those of the fluctuations in numbers. First, this federal report gives the per cent. of difference between the largest and smallest total amount of wages paid out in different weeks during the year for all workers. Then, there is given also the percentage of variation between the largest and smallest average weekly wage. The latter may fairly be said to give an idea of the extent to which steady workers' earnings suffer from the irregularity of the trade. Except in Rochester, where there is only a 6 per cent. variation, these differences are always large. (See Table 7.) With these figures may be compared the results of investigation in Kentucky, where the Commission on the Condition of Working Women in 1911 found average weekly wages of $5–$6 in "normal" times, rising to $6–$7 during the busy season, but falling as low as $1–$4 for those having any work at all in slack periods.

The other set of variations, differences in the total pay-roll, result both from differences in the numbers employed and from changes in the amounts earned by the steady workers as well.

Naturally, then, fluctuations in wages are greater than the differences in numbers alone. (See Table 7.) In one instance, that of a "contract coat shop — Bohemian" in Chicago, where the number of workers varied only 17 per cent. from season to season, the wages varied 49 per cent., indicating the tremendous loss from slack time suffered by the steady workers.

Another estimate of the loss in earnings from short time and seasonal irregularity was made by the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor for union members in 1913. Among garment workers, both men and women, the actual average yearly earnings were $432 and the computed full time yearly earnings $512. The difference is 15.7 per cent. and this loss occurred among both sexes, including men who being the more highly skilled workers generally suffer less from irregularity, and among union members with whom trade conditions are always at their best.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

GENERAL STATISTICS

A very large number of adult women are also employed in the manufacture of all kinds of women's clothing. A decline in home dress-making is evident from the great increase in the number of women wage-earners in this industry — an increase of 54 per cent. from the 56,000 employed in 1899 to the 97,000 employed in 1909. Proportionally, however, there was a slight tendency for men to replace women, but female employees were still decidedly in the majority in 1909, being 63 per cent. of the whole working force, though in 1899 they were about 68 per cent. The trade is extremely concentrated, centering in New York City, where nearly 59,000 — over half the total number of women workers — were found on December 15, 1909. The next state, Pennsylvania, was a long way behind with only 11,000 and Ohio came third with only 6,000. Conditions in New York City, then, may well be considered in detail.

SEASONAL VARIATIONS

There are no staple articles comparable to those in men's clothing, made in the woman's clothing trade which feels the full effect of rapid changes in style and of an eager demand at two

short seasons of the year. In the spring as many employees as can be gotten together work long hours, frequently overtime, under high pressure. Then work drops off, till July can only be described as "dead." The trade begins to pick up again in August and is busy through the fall, though hardly as intensely so as in the spring. By the end of November most women have bought their winter outfits, and everything is slack again till February. The result of these two busy and two dull seasons is that many women can find work only a small part of the year, and that the rest see their wages drop off and find the shops closed entirely for many days during the slack season. Dr. Woods Hutchinson, studying the situation in the dress and waist industry in New York City in 1910 described it as "good work for four months, moderate for six, and very little for two months out of every year." The case of Rachel, a shirt-waist operative, cited by Mrs. Clark and Miss Wyatt in "Making Both Ends Meet," illustrates how this affects a woman's wages. For four months she could get full time work and earned $14 or $15 a week. For three months she worked only five days a week, earning about $12. Four months more she worked three or four days and earned only $7–$10 weekly, and one month she could get no work at all. Her average weekly wage when the whole year was considered was little more than $10, a third less than what she could make with full-time work.

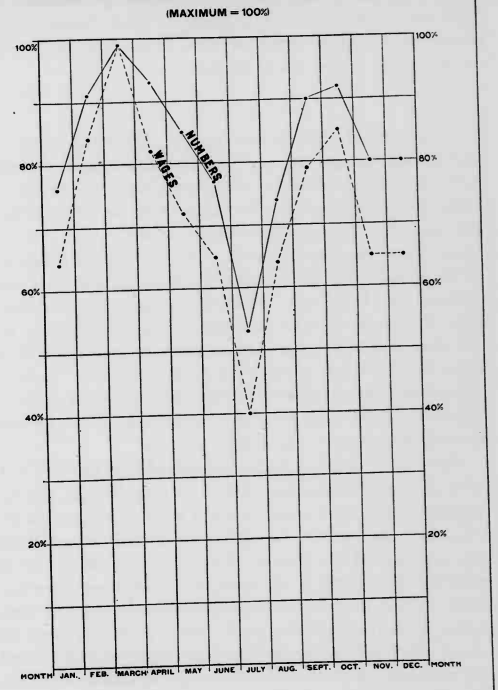
Statistics of Irregular Employment

Many women are even worse off than Rachel, for she was entirely out of work only one month in the year. The general situation is shown by the variation in numbers in the dress and waist industry in New York City in[1] 1912. (See Chart XIX.) These figures show that in July half the employees in the industry were out of work and for three months more, June, August and January, a quarter of the largest number employed could not find places. This situation is apparently worse than are conditions in those states where the trade is only slightly developed, since the variation from the maximum in the latter was smaller, only 15 per cent. in Wisconsin and New Jersey for two months a year,

[1] U. S. Department of Labor, Bulletin No. 146, p. 150.

CHART XIX

DRESS AND WAIST INDUSTRY, NEW YORK CITY, 1912
AVERAGE NUMBER EMPLOYED AND TOTAL AMOUNT WAGES BY MONTHS. MALE AND FEMALE.



and 25 per cent. in Massachusetts during two months. (See Chart XX.) The drop in wages was even greater than the drop in numbers, the difference, as has been said, indicating what the steadiest workers lose from slack time. Only 40 per cent. of the largest amount of wages was paid out in July and about 65 per cent. in January, June and August. These figures indicate a loss from short-time of not less than 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. of the wages of the steady workers.

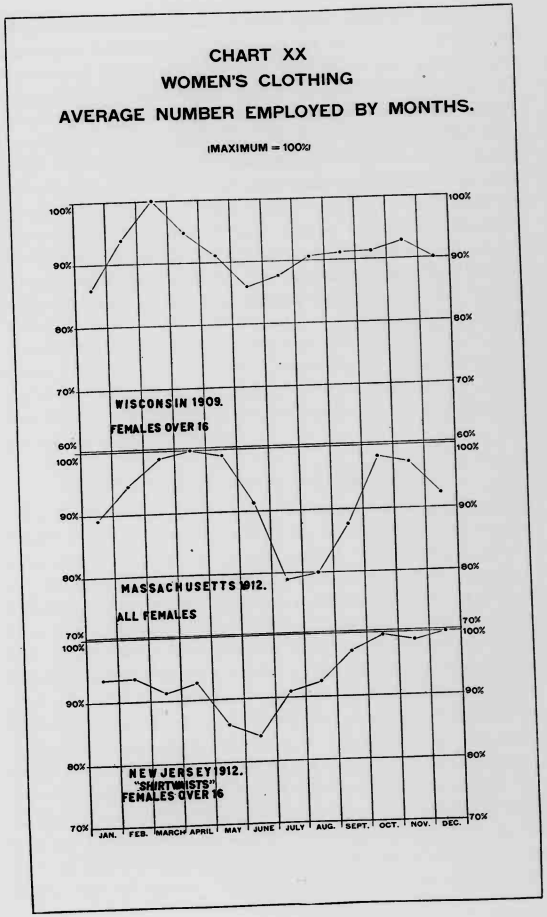
Summary

In the manufacture of clothing, the rush season is the spring and the slackest the summer. January is somewhat dull and the fall is busy. On the whole, the women's clothing industry is more irregular than the men's. The nation-wide variation in the number employed from month to month is only 8 per cent.[1] in the latter, but a closer examination, week by week, of different sorts of shops and different localities, discloses differences of from 16 per cent. to 54 per cent. These figures bring out the large numbers of women who are necessarily unemployed during part of the year; the still greater wage differences from season to season show that the steady workers lose from short time. In the manufacture of women's clothing in New York City, the center of the industry, in 1913, the number of employees fell 45 per cent. in the dull season and wages fell 60 per cent.

What is the result of this alternation of high pressure and lack of work on the women themselves — on their lives as well as their wages? It may be summed up in the words of an operator herself. "In the rush season," she said, "we worked from 8 o'clock in the morning till 9 o'clock at night. We only went from bed to work and from work to bed again, and sometimes if we sat up a little while at home in the evening, we were so tired we could not speak to the rest and we hardly knew what they were talking about. And still, although there was nothing for us but bed and the machine, we could not earn enough to take care of ourselves through the slack season."[2]

[1] See Chart XVIII.

[2] "Making Both Ends Meet" by Edith Wyatt and Sue Ainslee Clark, p. 132.



All legal minimum wage rates in the United States thus far are weekly rates. How far this kind of wage award would come from providing a living wage to a garment worker is shown by the case of "Rachel," previously mentioned, who, though a steady, experienced worker, had an average weekly wage for the year falling a third below her full time rate. Any adequate minimum wage rate in the garment trades must make an allowance for this loss from slack work, and 25 per cent. would not be too high a figure for such an allowance. If, in this way, financial pressure was brought to bear upon the employer to give steady employment to perhaps fewer people and to end the tension and overwork of the busy season, not only the pocketbooks, but the health and nerves of the workers and thereby the community would profit greatly.

SHIRT-MAKING

General Statistics

Owing to the steadier demand and more staple nature of the product, the making of shirts is one of the less seasonal of the industries grouped as "needle trades." In the north the business varies considerably from season to season, but hardly to the same degree as do most other branches of clothing manufacture.

In the latest United States Census of Manufactures, taken in 1909, the figures for "shirts" are combined with those for "men's clothing," so that exact statistics about the number of women wage-earners in the industry cannot be given. The census estimated, however, that there were about 48,000 wage-earners employed in shirt-making and that probably three-quarters of those were women. New York is the leading state in the industry employing about 22,000 females.

Statistics of Irregular Employment

In Massachusetts in 1912 the "average number employed by months," showed a considerable drop in the number of women wage-earners in June, July and August. The numbers fell in August as much as 25 per cent. below the maximum. In New Jersey in the same year, there was a falling off of nearly 10 per cent. during the same three months. In Massachusetts, the numbers during the rest of the year remained steady, but in New Jersey a higher level was reached during the first months of the year. A federal investigation in 1911 likewise found marked busy and slack seasons in California and Maryland factories.

In New York state, according to the recent and extensive study of the trade carried on by the New York State Factory Investigating Commission for the year beginning December 15, 1912, the seasonal variation of the industry in New York City was not wholly identical with that in other parts of the state. This is due largely to the different lines of goods manufactured in the city and upstate. In New York City the principal prod-

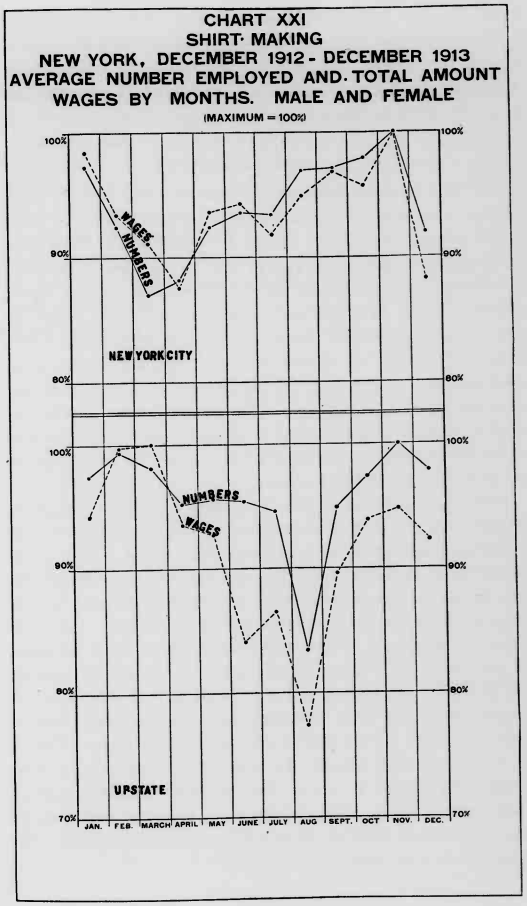
uct is cheap work-shirts, a relatively staple product, so that the busy season is there distributed over a large part of the year, not following exactly the familiar course of busy in the fall and spring, slack after Christmas and in the summer. Upstate, however, the seasonal variations are greater and more frequent and the summer is distinctly dull.

From this investigation the monthly and weekly fluctuations in numbers employed can be obtained. These statistics, together with the variation in amount of wages by months, are presented graphically in Chart XXI. In the city the numbers fell in March 13 per cent. below their highest point which came in November, while upstate the maximum number was also at work in November, but the smallest number of workers, 17 per cent. below the maximum, was found in August. As usual, the fluctuations by weeks were greater than by months. In the city, weekly variations were 15 per cent. instead of the 13 per cent. by months; and upstate weekly variations were 31 per cent. while the greatest monthly variation was only 17 per cent.

Interviews with selected women workers by the New York State Factory Investigating Commission showed in a large number of cases, time lost for industrial reasons. While out of 94 women interviewed upstate, 10 lost no time whatever, among the remaining 84, there were 45 instances of loss of time for industrial reasons, averaging eleven days each. Among 177 women in New York City, 18 were entirely out of work for from one week to six months and 70 lost from one week to four months on account of slack work. There were 102 women who reported a loss of time from industrial reasons and their average loss of time was 34 days, over a tenth of the possible number of working days in the year. But since most of the workers are employed at piece-work, no variation in numbers is an adequate measure of the full extent of the irregularity. Shirt-making is another industry in which earnings must be studied in order to understand the full effect of seasonal irregularity.

Shifting

There is some evidence to show a similar flux of workers in the shirt-making industry to that found in so much other factory



work. In one New York factory whose pay-rolls could be checked back for a year, the State Commission found that 17 per cent. of the workers had remained less than four weeks, 24 per cent. more, from five to sixteen weeks and but 29 per cent. had stayed 49 weeks or longer.

Variations in Earnings

The most adequate measure of seasonal variations in shirt-making is therefore the fluctuations in wages. Both in New York City and up-state, the changes in the amount of wages paid out at different seasons are greater than the changes in numbers. By months, wages in the city were at their lowest point in April, when they were 12½ per cent. below the maximum, while up-state the greatest decline was 23 per cent. in August (see Chart XXI). By weeks the differences are considerably larger, being approximately 19 per cent. for the city and very nearly 40 per cent. for the rest of the state. The proportionately greater decline in wages than in numbers is of course mainly the result of short-time in reducing the wages of employees who remain on the pay-rolls during the dull seasons.

Even in these totals, combining as they do many different establishments, the extreme fluctuations in individual factories are undoubtedly smoothed out to a considerable extent. Such is the conclusion to be drawn from the large variation at different seasons in the average wage of women workers questioned on this point by the State Factory Investigating Commission. In New York City where the greatest weekly variation in wages was about 19 per cent., the average weekly wage of 197 women workers was $7.39 in rush seasons and only $5.13 in dull seasons, a difference of 25 per cent. Between dull and "normal" seasons alone there was a falling off of 6½ per cent. in wages. Out of 85 women workers up-state, 14 reported no difference in their wages from season to season, but the others received average weekly wages which were 12 per cent. lower in dull than in "normal" times, twice as great a difference as in the city. No figures as to rush seasons were given.

Summary

Shirt-making, then, is irregular like other needle trades, and this seasonal irregularity is reflected to some extent in the numbers employed at different parts of the year. Fifteen per cent. fewer than the maximum were employed in New York City in the dullest week of 1913, and 31 per cent. fewer in the rest of the state. It is a study of earnings, however, which best brings out the extent of seasonal variations, for even those who hold their places during dull seasons suffer considerable wage-losses from short-time. Wages declined 19 per cent. in New York City in the dullest week of 1913 and very nearly 40 per cent. in the rest of the state. Under these conditions, the fixing of a minimum weekly wage rate alone would not necessarily provide an adequate annual income to the woman worker.

MISCELLANEOUS NEEDLE TRADES

Introduction

The same causes — a greatly increased demand at two seasons of the year, style changes, and a consequent reluctance on the retailer's part to place his orders far in advance,— produce great seasonal irregularity in every subsidiary line connected with the manufacture of clothing.

Men's Furnishings

There is the manufacture of "men's furnishings," so called, under which is included collars and cuffs, suspenders, belts, neckties, etc. Nearly 30,000 adult women found employment in this industry in 1909 and about half of these were in New York state. The evidence obtainable shows here, too, dull seasons after Christmas and through the early summer till the first of August. In Massachusetts during the six months of January, February, April, May, June, and July, 1912, the number of women employed fell off from a quarter to a third. March was comparatively busy. Besides this, the factories were open on the average only 273 days out of a possible 305, so that even the steadiest workers must have lost at least a tenth of their working time and full-time wages. A union official in New York City,[1] describing similar conditions among the women workers on men's neckwear in 1913, said that they have to expect slack work after Christmas and in the summer, amounting to at least nine weeks in all or a sixth of the whole year. At these periods what little work there is is divided equally among them, so they do not lose on an average quite a sixth of their wages, but of course in this slack season their pay falls far below its usual level.

Vest Making

In vest making women are employed only for the most unskilled tasks. This condition differs from other work on men's garments and should therefore be considered separately. Most

[1] Mary Dreier in Life and Labor, December, 1913, p. 358.

of these women are out of work for three months every year, thus reducing by a quarter their already scanty wages of $5–$8 a week.

Dressmaking

This industry is one of the older occupations for women in which a very large number, estimated at 40,000 for New York City alone, are at work. Here in the city, the more important type of worker is no longer the dressmaker with two or three girls sewing for her, nor the "sewing women" going out to work by the day, but instead, the employee of the large custom dressmaking establishment or custom department of a big retail store. Much specialization and an absence of any personal contact exist — in other words, factory conditions. The busy seasons in such shops are the usual ones, fall and spring, October and November, March and April. Particularly in the spring rush girls may be asked to take work home and finish it or to work at the shop two or three evenings a week. The reverse of the picture is more or less slack time after Christmas and, almost inevitably, unemployment during the summer. The better shops may tide things over in January, laying the women off in relays, or possibly not at all, but all firms alike turn off the great majority of their force in the summer. An investigation made in New York City in 1909 revealed the fact that a quarter of the dressmakers questioned had been out of work three months or more during the year. The following instances are typical. "Elsie,[1] a young, capable, energetic girl, was working in the same shop for the third season at $6 a week. She was laid off from July 4 to September 10. Mildred who had received special trade training, held her first position from February to June, getting $5 a week. Then she was idle about three months, but in September began work in another place at $7 a week, where she had to work overtime until 8 P. M. several days every week." Dressmakers are generally paid a flat weekly rate, so there is but little possibility of increasing their earnings by overtime work. Their nominal rate of pay is given as $5–$9 a week, but when allowance is made for the loss of from two to four months yearly, from a sixth to a quarter of their working time, their real weekly rate is lowered to from $4 to $8 instead.

[1] "Irregularity of Employment of Women," by Louise C. Odencrantz, in the Survey, May 1, 1909, p. 207.

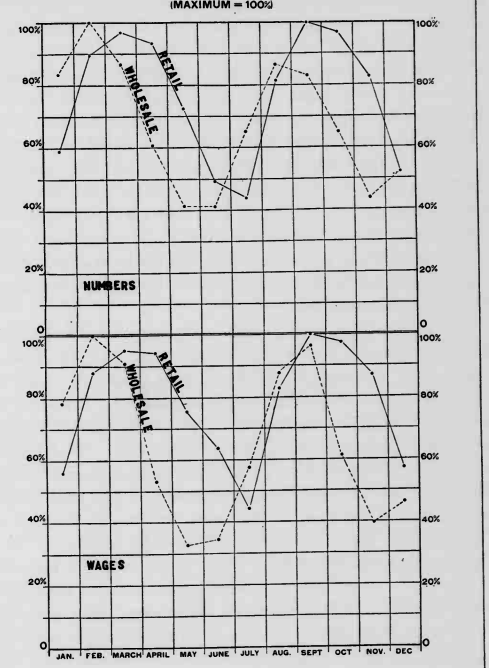
Millinery

In the millinery trade the problem of irregularity of employment is even more acute. There are nearly 125,000 women milliners in the United States and 16,000 in New York City alone according to the 1910 Census of Occupations. A large part of these women can get work in their trade for only half the year. An investigation of a large number of firms in Manhattan in 1913[1] found that during the year, the number of employees was less than 25 per cent. below the maximum, only 25 weeks in the smaller retail establishments, 31 weeks in the larger ones, and 21 weeks in the wholesale houses. Naturally the busy season begins somewhat earlier in the great wholesale establishments where hats are made and trimmed for the retail trade than in the retail shops themselves. Wholesale firms commence to make up felt hats as early as July and end their work usually by November or before; work on summer hats begins the first of January and is generally over by the first of May. Work in retail stores begins and ends generally about a month later. This is well illustrated by the number employed monthly during 1913 by the Manhattan firms previously mentioned, where the range was from 259 to 591 in the retail trade and from 468 to 1,141 in the wholesale trade. (See Chart XXII.) The best months of the spring season for the wholesale firms were February and March but for the retail trade they were March and April. In the fall the wholesale trade was most active during August and September, whereas the retail houses were most active in September and October. Large as the differences are by months, they are even greater for separate weeks through the year. In both branches of the trade, the smallest number at work in any one week was only 37 per cent. of the largest number. It is, however, very difficult for the girls in the wholesale houses, who are in the majority in numbers, to lengthen each season a month by going into retail shops. In the first place, the work is on a different basis. The retail worker is paid time wages and quality is emphasized, whereas most of the wholesale houses pay on a piece basis so that quantity of output becomes the im-

[1] Made by the Committee on Women's Work of the Russell Sage Foundation in co-operation with the State Factory Investigating Commission.

CHART XXII

MILLINERY, SELECTED FIRMS, MANHATTAN, 1913. AVERAGE NUMBER FEMALES EMPLOYED AND TOTAL AMOUNT OF THEIR WAGES, BY MONTHS.



portant consideration. Then by the time the wholesaler is thrown out of work, the height of the season in retail houses is past, and a reduction in their force has already begun so that additional workers are seldom needed.

It is true that milliners, like so many other women workers, make many changes from one position to another. Out of 3,983 women employed in the course of a year, this New York City investigation of 1913 found that only 672 or 17 per cent. of the total number remained 40 weeks or more in the same position, 52 per cent. stayed eight weeks or less and 19 per cent., more than the number who stayed 40 weeks or over, were in the same position a fortnight or less. The lowest paid were found to change the most frequently. But it must be remembered that the highly paid designers and forewomen are by far the more likely to be retained during the dull season, and, knowing that from 60 to 75 out of every 100 milliners are necessarily unemployed during that time, we must lay the responsibility for most of this shifting to the short seasons of the trade and not to the restlessness or inefficiency of the workers.

The spring rush season, with everybody anxious for a new Easter hat, is the busiest time of the year. At that time late orders from customers in the retail trade frequently cause overtime and Sunday work which is seldom paid for. However, those few retail workers who keep their places throughout the year, being paid a flat rate, lose little from short-time. The Manhattan investigation of 1913 showed that the minimum amount of wages paid out week by week through the year to the retail workers studied was 33 per cent. of the maximum amount which is only slightly below the 37 per cent. difference in numbers. On the other hand, wholesale workers whose wages are on a piece basis of course gain from the rush to some extent, but even the minority who are kept on in the dull season suffer wage losses from short-time during that period. This is indicated by a fall in the total amount of wages to only 29 per cent. of the maximum while numbers fall to 37 per cent. (See Chart XXII.) But the average weekly returns of any woman milliner become very meager, when they are halved, as should be done to allow for a lack of work during half the year.

The Alliance Employment Bureau in New York City, which has had wide experience in placing girls as milliners, considers that only 20 per cent. or less of all milliners can hope for steady work the year round. From the height of the season there is a gradual reduction, then at the end the few who are left are also laid off.

The Bureau found in 1907 that only four out of fifty-seven trade school graduates were able to stay with the same firm a year or more without more than one month of enforced idleness. Finally, the industrial histories of two milliners, both girls with special training, will illustrate how this irregularity affects thousands of individual women, exposing them to all the difficulties and dangers of irregular work and uncertain pay. (See Table 10, A and B.) Ten positions in three years or six positions in little more than a year, with long periods of idleness into the bargain, represent that most undesirable and demoralizing condition, the life of the casual worker, and emphasize the conclusion of the Manhattan investigation of 1913 that in order to provide a living income through the year for milliners, not only a weekly minimum wage rate, but also lengthened seasons are of paramount importance.

TABLE 10

MILLINERY — NEW YORK CITY

A. TRADE HISTORY OF A MILLINER, 1907[1]

No. position	Number months employed	Trade	Kind of work	Weekly wage	Reason for leaving
1...	6	Millinery (retail, Patterson, N.J.)	Apprentice.....	None.....	Family moved to N. Y.
2...	3	Millinery (wholesale).....	Improver.....	$6 (piece)....	" Laid off," slack season
3...	1	Millinery (retail)	Learner.....	$9 (time).....	" Laid off," slack season
4...	2	Making handkerchiefs.....	Learner..... / Operator.....	$5.50 (time).. / $5–$6 (piece)..	To return to millinery
5...	4	Millinery (wholesale).....	Maker.....	$8–$10 (piece).	" Laid off," slack season
6...	2	Medicines.....	Wrapper, labeler.	$5 (time).....	To return to millinery
7...	3	Millinery (wholesale).....	Maker.....	$8–$14 (piece).	" Laid off," slack season
8...	3	Medicines.....	Wrapper, labeler.	$5 (time).....	To return to millinery
9...	4	Millinery.....	Maker.....	$8–$14 (piece).	" Laid off," slack season
	5 months		out of work		
10...	3	Magazine bindery.....	Folder, etc.....	$6 (time).....	Idle half of each month

[1] From Annual Report of the Alliance Employment Bureau, 1907, p. 12.

B. Trade History of a Milliner [1]

No. position	Dates employed	Kind of Work	Weekly wage	Reason for leaving
1.....	Oct. 1–Nov. 15.....	Millinery...	$4	Slack work
2.....	Nov. 15–Dec. 1.....	Millinery...	$4	Slack work
	1 month out of work.			
3.....	Jan. 1–Jan. 15.....	Millinery...	$5	To return to previous place
4.....	Jan. 15–May 1.....	Millinery...	$5	Slack work
	2 months out of work.			
5.....	Aug. 1–Nov. 1.....	Millinery...	$5	Slack work
6.....	Nov. 1.....	Office work.	.....	

[1] See "Irregularity of Employment of Women," by Louise C. Odencrantz, in the Survey, May 1, 1909, p. 199.

Artificial Flower Making

Other sorts of manufacture connected with the millinery trade are likewise highly irregular. The making of artificial flowers and fancy feathers is concentrated in New York City, over nine-tenths of all the adult women employed being found here. Miss Van Kleeck's exhaustive study summarizes conditions as "three or four months of slack work every year, its varying extent depending on whether or not flowers are a fashionable trimming for winter hats. Then four girls out of five are out of work."[1] She found only 873 women employed in the slack season, 19.5 per cent. of the 4,470 working at the height of the season and even this small minority worked part time and at *reduced rates*. This last is an unusual method of reducing the amount of wages during the slack season. The average weekly wage for weeks worked for those women who had a year or more of trade experience was found by this investigation to be $7.76. On this basis their average yearly income should be approximately $400. But as a matter of fact, half of these women had annual incomes of less than $300. The resulting wage-loss of $100, 25 per cent. of the computed full-time wage, must be ascribed mainly to slack work. But few gains from overtime are possible, since home-workers take most of the extra work during the busy season. The trade is least irregular when the manufacture of fancy feathers is combined with the flower making, but at the best "June is dull and the fall uncertain."[2]

[1] "Artificial Flower Makers," by Mary Van Kleeck, p. 41.

[2] Ibid, p. 54.

Straw Sewing

Another branch of the trade is straw-sewing, by which is meant the sewing by machines of straw braids for hats. In this line a majority of the employees are women. Practically all the work is done in five months of the year, December, January, February, March and April and then almost all the force is dismissed. This is one of the most glaring examples of seasonal irregularity existent, but the problem is made less acute by the comparatively small numbers involved and the high wage level. At present women operatives can average $15–$30 a week through the brief busy season though it is said a cut in wages is an ever present menace.

French Edge Work

With the present styles in millinery, many of the factories making straw hats have filled in during the spring and summer with "French edge work." This is the finishing of the rolled edges of velvet hats, and is highly skilled, highly paid machine work. The season for this is also about five months, closing a little before the straw-sewing begins. Unfortunately it often proves extremely difficult for the same operatives to master the knack of both these trades.

Fur and Felt Hats

Only about a quarter of the wage-earners employed in the making of "fur and felt hats" are women. All figures combine the making of men's and of women's hats, and as the demand for men's hats is not concentrated in one part of the year to the same degree as that for women's, the irregularity of the trade is thus reduced. The statistics, however, show a decided drop in the number of women employed during the half of the year from April through August or September. In Massachusetts in 1912 this difference was about 25 per cent. in April, 66 per cent. in May, about 33 per cent. in June and July, and 25 per cent. in August and September. Moreover, in Massachusetts, the factories are entirely closed for many days yearly, which means a large loss of time and earnings to the steady workers. In 1912, there was an average loss of 53 working days or 15 per cent. of the

working year for each establishment, by this inadequate method of measurement alone. When we add to this the short time not brought out by these statistics but which almost always precedes the entire closing of any factory, we see that the steady worker as well as the casual one, must suffer seriously from seasonal irregularity.

BOOK BINDING

General Statistics

The Census of Manufacturers for 1909, stated that an average of 57,926 women 16 years of age and over were employed in the printing and publishing business in 1909. This number was 22 per cent. of all the wage-earners in that industry. It represents a slight proportional increase from 20 per cent. in 1899 and a large increase in numbers over the 39,868 women of that year. The number of women in the trade increased 45 per cent. during the decade while the number of men increased but 32 per cent. According to figures of the Census, then, the women tend to displace the men workers to some extent. While bookbinding is but one of several lines of work included under this general head, it is in binderies that many of these women are employed, and as "bindery girls" they must be added to the long list of women workers whose employment is irregular.

Seasonal Variations

These bindery girls suffer comparatively little, however, from the usual seasonal irregularity. There is likely to be an increase of work before Christmas and sometimes in the spring, while the summer is apt to be rather dull. Yet these changes are not sharply marked in many localities and classes of establishments, and, as a result, the number of workers does not vary very greatly during the year. Eight or nine out of every ten book-binders can hope to hold their places the whole year through. Irregularity in this industry comes through the erratic hours of the trade. The work is done just as the orders come in, so weekly or monthly in the case of periodicals, quarterly sometimes as with telephone directories, or at wholly irregular intervals will come a short period of long hours, of overtime, and perhaps night work, followed by another comparatively short interval of slack work or entire unemployment. Both the New York cases testing the constitutionality of the law prohibiting night-work for women, the Williams case in

1907, and the present Schweinler Press case, involve bindery girls. This alternation of long hours with short ones, or no work at all, causes the women's wages to vary correspondingly, and the net result of it all, it can be shown, is a loss in both time and wages. Investigators have found like conditions in the trade in New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Kansas City.

Statistics of Irregular Employment

Under such industrial conditions, the measurement of trade irregularity, "number of days in operation yearly" is of no importance; 301 is the average number of days in operation yearly of all book-binding establishments in Massachusetts, 1912; for New Jersey in the same year the same figure is 300. This simply means that some variety of work done in these establishments is always going on and that some of the men and women are always employed.

The varying numbers employed at different seasons of the year is much more significant in some parts of the country than in others. In New York City in 1910–11 this difference ran as high as 25 per cent. and in Kansas City in 1912–13, it was 20 per cent. but in Massachusetts in 1912 and in Philadelphia, 1914, it was only 12 per cent. In Massachusetts the smallest number were at work after Christmas and the largest number in the late summer; in Philadelphia the busiest period was before Christmas and the slackest during June and July. Seasonal irregularity and the resulting casual work are in some cases a rather important factor, but nowhere an adequate measurement of the entire extent of irregularity in the industry.

In order to gain a more complete idea of its seriousness we must turn once more to short time and the consequent reduction of the earnings of the steady worker.

While Miss Van Kleeck, in her study of book-binding in New York City, 1910-11, found, as has been said, that only 76 per cent. of the women workers could have places the year round, she also found that 73 per cent. of the workers lost more or less time from lack of work during the year. The entirely irregular character of the losses, a few hours here and a few there, or an odd number of days, is reflected in the fact that a quarter of the women, the largest group suffering from unemployment, lost some

time, but could not tell how much. (See Table 11.) The report cities the instance of an "expert folder who helps to bind a commercial register issued quarterly" who was, during a year, at work: February 1st to March 7th; May 5th to July 15th; August 1st to Labor Day; November 15th to January 15th; idle: March 7th to May 15th; July 15th to August 1st; Labor Day to November 15th. She had work little more than half the year. "It would have been better," she said, "to have had $6 a week steadily instead of earning $8 so irregularly."

TABLE 11
WOMEN BOOKBINDERS IN NEW YORK CITY, 1910–11
Numbers and Percentages Losing Different Amounts of Time in a Year
(From Women in the Bookbinding Trade, by Mary Van Kleeck, p. 118)

Amount of Time Lost	Number losing	Per cent. losing
No time	40	27.0
Less than 1 month	27	18.1
1–3 months	22	14.9
3–6 months	14	9.5
6 months or more	8	5.4
Time of uncertain length	37	25.0
Total	148	100.0

The prevalence of slack work is further shown by some figures from Philadelphia. It was found that 87 women out of 147 had changed from establishment to establishment, making 200 changes in all, and that 52 of these, very nearly a quarter, were due to dull or unsteady work.

In Philadelphia 129 employees were asked how many months of the year they were not employed full time. More than half of them, it turned out, were on short time from one to eight months during the year. Twenty-five worked short time from six to eight months, 30 between three and six months, and 13, one or two months. The largest number were on short time, six months and four months, a half and a third of a year. This prevalence of short time causes us to turn to the hours worked. Where did this loss occur? Again from the Philadelphia investigation, we have the average weekly working hours for 90 girls during a year. Full time for these girls was 48 hours a week, but only one girl reached this point, whereas two averaged only forty hours. Only 27 girls averaged from 45 to 48 weeks during

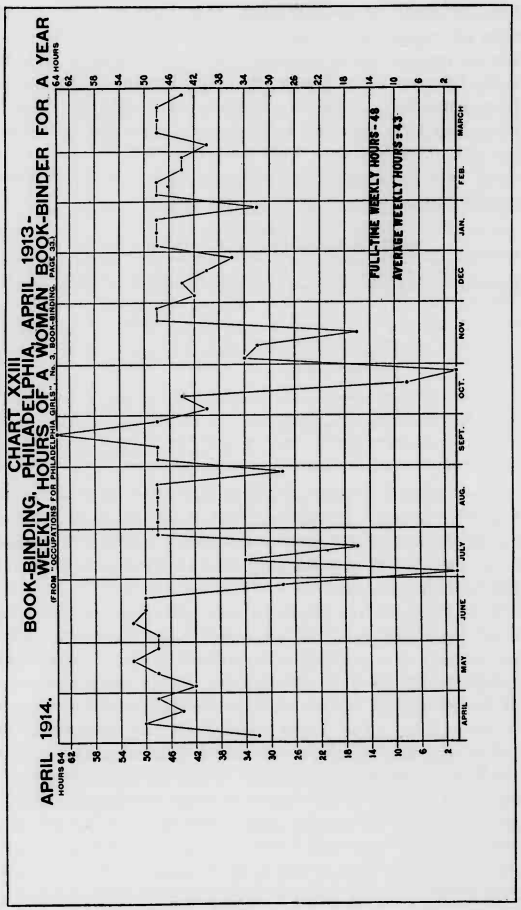


CHART XXIII
BOOK-BINDING, PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 1913-APRIL 1914.
WEEKLY HOURS OF A WOMAN BOOK-BINDER FOR A YEAR
(FROM "OCCUPATIONS FOR PHILADELPHIA GIRLS," NO. 3, BOOKBINDING, PAGE 43)
HOURS 64 62 58 54 50 46 42 38 34 30 26 22 18 14 10 6 2
FULL-TIME WEEKLY HOURS=48
AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS=43
APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUG. SEPT. OCT. NOV DEC JAN. FEB. MARCH

the year, but 63 had average weekly hours between 40 and 44. Forty-three hours was the average reached by the greatest number. Full pay is obtained only for full-time work, so all these girls but one would fall below their nominal rate of wages for the year, 10 per cent. being the most frequent loss.

These losses from full time conceal wide fluctuations in the hours of individual workers week by week as Chart XXIII illustrates. This chart gives the actual hours worked each week during the year by a Philadelphia girl who is said to be a "typical worker." Aside from the two weeks when she had no work at all, this girl's weekly hours varied all the way from 8 to 64 and without doubt her wages went up and down correspondingly, being eight times as much in the longest as in the shortest week. Her average weekly hours for the whole year were 43, making her annual loss from the full time, 48 hour week, and consequently from the full time wage rate, about 10 per cent.

Variation in Earnings

Bookbinding is another industry, then, in which wage-rates and earnings are not likely to be identical. To study this relation between earnings and wage-rates, the weekly rates and actual average weekly earnings of 158 women who were personally interviewed, were taken from the pay-roll by the Philadelphia investigators. In every wage group above $5, with the exception of the four women at $11 and over, fewer women were found to receive given amounts than were rated at those sums. For instance, only eight women were rated at less than $5 a week, but 35 actually received these amounts; 31 were supposed to be paid between $7 and $8, but only 24 actually received such a sum; 43 had a rate of between $8 and $9, whereas only 21 were really found in this wage group.

TABLE 12

WOMAN BOOKBINDERS, PHILADELPHIA, 1912–13

Number at Given Rates and Number with Actual Average Weekly Earnings

(From "Occupations for Philadelphia Girls, No. 3, Bookbinding," pp. 43–46.)

	$2–$2 99	$3–$3 99	$4–$4 99	$5–$5 99	$6–$6 99	$7–$7 99	$8–$8 99	$9–$9 99	$10–$10 99	$11–and over	Total
Number at rate.....	...	2	6	20	23	31	43	17	12	4	158
Number with actual average weekly earnings...	2	21	12	21	22	24	21	15	7	4	*149

*Actual average weekly earnings not given for nine women.

Miss Van Kleeck's investigation in New York City shows a similar irregularity in earnings, week by week, and a similar loss from possible full time earnings, for workers supposed to be paid a flat rate. Two examples of wages each week for a month are cited as "typical." The first is a magazine binder. The first and second week of the month she received $12, the third week there was no work at all, the fourth her pay was between $8 and $9. Her average weekly wage for the month was $8, only two-thirds of her maximum wage. A "learner" received $4, $5, $5.92 and $4.65 for the four weeks, making an average of $4.92 for the month, about five-sixths of her highest wage. Miss Van Kleeck sums up the losses of women book-binders in New York City by comparing their full-time and actual annual earnings for the year studied. Their average weekly earnings were $7.22. On this basis, annual earnings would be about $375. But in reality they were only $325. Thus there was an average loss of $50 yearly, almost a dollar a week or 14 per cent. of the weekly wage, caused by the alternation of long hours of work with slack time.

Summary

Work in binderies is more likely to be good in the spring and before Christmas and slack in the summer. In consequence, there is a reduction of the working force of from 12 per cent. in Massachusetts and Philadelphia, to 23 per cent. in New York City during the dull season. But in addition to these necessarily casual workers, all the women feel the effects of the variation of the work with orders, the result of this irregularity being an annual loss in hours and earnings. From all the evidence it would appear that on account of these irregular hours within short periods, unless the trade becomes more regular, any weekly wage-rate, which attempts to provide the worker with a living income, must be increased by a tenth (10 per cent.) to a seventh (14 per cent.), to make up for the loss in time and earnings suffered by the steady employees on account of this irregularity.

SALESGIRLS

General Statistics

According to the volume on "Occupations" of the United States Census of 1910, 250,000 saleswomen were found employed in retail establishments. In addition, of the 111,000 "clerks in stores," the larger proportion "were not engaged in clerical work but were also salespeople" says the census. Here is an industrial army of uncertain numbers, but approaching 300,000 women at the lowest estimate. Because we deal with them directly, few classes of workers are more in the public consciousness. The salesgirl's low wages with her necessarily higher expenses in maintaining a good personal appearance, have been the subject of much popular concern. On this account it is particularly important to find out whether the average salesgirl is so steadily employed that a minimum wage rate, based on cost of living alone, would really provide her with an adequate "living" income.

Seasonal Variations

It is frequently thought that the earnings of salesgirls are not affected by irregular employment, since the girls are paid by the week or sometimes by commissions on sales. Seldom if ever is a retail store or any part of it closed because trade is slack. Therefore, in contrast to manufacturing industries, it is true that the women who are so lucky as to keep their places all the year round suffer very slightly from seasonal irregularity. But all the facts at hand show that a very large percentage can find work only before Christmas and in the spring and are turned off after Christmas and in the summer. For these girls, retail trade is a highly seasonal employment.

Statistics of Irregular Employment

Taking up first the so-called "steady" workers, a District of Columbia inquiry made by the federal Bureau of Labor in 1912

showed considerable steadiness of employment. Over 200 women who had been wage earners for a year or more were questioned on the subject and 88 per cent. worked more than 40 weeks during the preceeding year. The average period of employment during the year for all of these women was very nearly 48 weeks. In Massachusetts, the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards in 1911 also came to the conclusion that the work is very regular except for some "forced vacations." A few women were compelled to take such "forced vacations" without pay in the summer or after Christmas. Only 5 per cent. of the steady workers staying throughout the year in a single store lost time from industrial reasons and these few lost an average of fifteen working days during the year. The Commission also found in still another group of workers whose average length of employment in one position was 42 weeks out of the year, that only 6 per cent. lost time from this cause, though these few lost a large amount of time in this way — 18 per cent. of their total period of employment or 46 working days.

We do not, therefore, find evidence that the steady worker in retail stores is subject to any great loss of time or money on account of lack of work. But we still have to consider whether all employees can find steady employment throughout the year in retail stores. The facts about the varying numbers employed at different seasons are undoubtedly masked by the constantly changing personnel of the working force of any large store. Yet considerable light is thrown on this point by the "number employed by months" which the New York State Factory Investigating Commission obtained for the eighteen largest department stores in New York City, and for department and five-cent and ten-cent stores in the rest of the state for the year 1913. In New York City stores, the largest, smallest, and average number employed is given for each establishment, the figures being given the Commission by the firms themselves. The table following shows that nearly 40 per cent. of the total number of employees were out of work at the slack time of the year. While in one store (No. 7) the difference was only 15 per cent., in another (No. 11) it was almost 50 per cent. In every instance the greatest number of employees was at work during the Christmas rush and the smallest number in the summer.

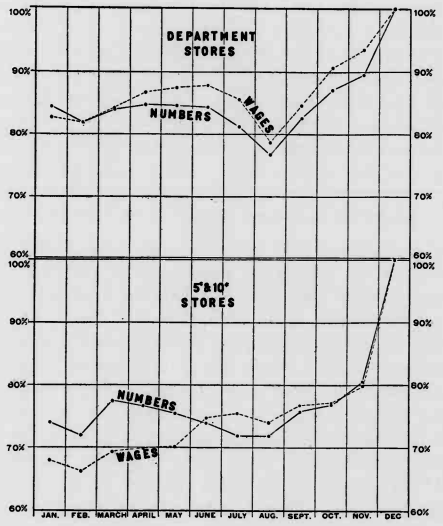
TABLE 13
RETAIL STORES, NEW YORK CITY, 1913
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN THE 18 LARGEST ESTABLISHMENTS

	Firm	Greatest number employed	Least number employed	Average number employed	Per cent. least number is of greatest	Dropped or left during year	Added during year
Number	1	5,724	3,999	4,296	69.8	5,950	5,979
	2	3,672	3,075	3,497	83.7	540	875
	3	884	416	533	47.0	538	611
	4	1,863	1,252	1,460	67.2	2,657	2,605
	5	5,187	2,888	3,500	55.6	8,750	8,155
	6	5,743	3,283	3,750	57.0	10,382	12,159
	7	2,205	1,879	1,979	85.2	1,795	1,839
	8	928	459	664	49.4	.....	.....
	9	3,125	1,669	2,359	50.2	.....	.....
	10	2,095	1,518	1,896	72.4	.....	.....
	11	2,369	1,190	1,760	50.2	.....	.....
	12	5,340	3,483	4,272	65.2	6,712	6,809
	13	1,250	735	800	58.8	746	1,025
	14	1,497	1,020	1,085	68.9	477	477
	15	2,100	1,570	1,800	74.7	.....	.....
	16	1,318	642	864	48.7	1,250	1,286
	17	2,887	1,644	2,313	56.9	2,539	2,967
	18	7,400	4,600	5,000	62.1	.....	5,500
Total		55,587	35,322	41,828	63.5	.....	.....

Like conditions existed in the up-state stores. (See Chart XXIV.) In the department stores, only 81 per cent. of the maximum number were at work in February, 81 per cent. in July and 76 per cent. in August. If we take the numbers week by week, instead of the monthly averages which smooth down the extreme variations, there was an even greater drop, to 70 per cent. during the third week in August. The fluctuation in the total amount of wages paid out monthly was very similar or a little less than the variation in numbers — quite in contrast to the situation in factories, where wages drop below "number employed" on account of the losses incurred by steady workers through short time. There is practically no such short time in stores, and the lower paid and less experienced girls are more likely to be discharged during the slack periods, causing the wage level for those who are left to rise higher at this time. The five-cent and ten-cent stores up-state showed in general the same state of affairs in regard to regularity of work and wages. Average numbers employed fell off somewhat more, to 71 per cent. of the maximum in July and August, by monthly averages, and to

CHART XXIV
NEW YORK, UPSTATE RETAIL STORES, 1913
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SALESGIRLS AND TOTAL AMOUNT OF THEIR WAGES BY MONTHS.

(MAXIMUM = 100%)



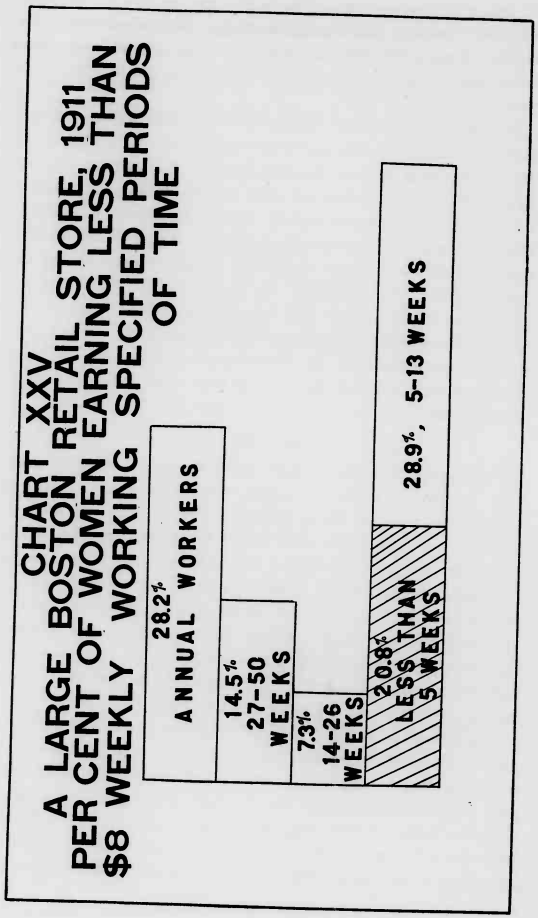
60 per cent. in one week in February when the number employed week by week was considered separately. Wages followed a like course, though the percentage of variation dropped somewhat below that for numbers employed during the first months of the year.

Evidence as to similar irregularity comes from widely scattered points— Baltimore, Kansas City and Portland, Oregon. In Baltimore, Miss Butler's investigation of 1909 showed that the larger retail stores employed only two-thirds as many women during the dull season as in busy times. In Kansas City over a tenth of the saleswomen questioned by the Board of Public Welfare in 1912-13 had lost time from unemployment during the previous year. In Portland, the report of the Social Survey Committee in 1912 found that only those girls who had been two years or more in the same place could be reasonably sure of keeping their positions after the Christmas rush was over, and even then some girls who had been in the same store for several years were laid off.

Shifting

Necessarily, then, on account of the varying number of salesgirls required at different seasons, some women can remain in their places for only short periods. But an intensive analysis of the labor force made in a single large department store in Boston reveals more clearly the actual situation in regard to the very small proportion of steady workers. (See Chart XXV.) In this investigation of all the women earning $8 a week or less, who were 91.7 per cent. of the whole number, all specials, emergency and Christmas help were excluded, yet just about one-half the women remained in the establishment less than three months. Only about a quarter remained the whole year.

The amount of shifting in New York City stores mounts up to almost incredible numbers. (See Table 13.) In all the twelve stores together for which the number added and left during the year could be ascertained, the number of changes was greater than the largest number employed at any one time. Firm No. 6 had only 5,700 employees at the maximum and 3,200 at the minimum, yet 10,000 employees left during the year, voluntarily and



involuntarily, and 12,000 were taken on,— more than twice as many as the largest number employed. In four of the other stores, for which these facts could be ascertained, Nos. 4, 5, 12 and 17, the number shifting through the establishment during the year was larger than the greatest number at work at any one time. In each of the stores, there was a difference of from 35 per cent. to 45 per cent. between the smallest and largest number employed at any one time. With Firm No. 2, where there was only a 17 per cent. difference in numbers, it is noticeable that the flux of workers was also lowest in proportion to the total numbers employed; 3,600 were employed in the busiest season, 3,000 in the dullest, and only 540 left and 875 new employees were hired during the year. Up-state, a large department store employed 1,777 persons during the year. Of this number 5.9 per cent. remained less than a single week. About a quarter, 25.9 per cent. stayed from one to four weeks, and over half, or 50.2 per cent. less than three months. Only 12.2 per cent., less than an eighth, held their places eleven months or more out of the year.

On the other side of the continent, in the state of Washington, a survey made by the Industrial Welfare Commission showed that a quarter of the 1,268 women employees in mercantile establishments who were questioned, had been in their present positions three months or less.

While it is difficult to get reliable evidence as to the cause of this great flux of workers and how far it is due to conditions over which they have no control, yet the results of a few inquiries may be noted here. The 1911 Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards, in investigating the trade histories of 2,726 salesgirls, found that 26 per cent., or over a quarter of the shifts among the 1,885 women who had changed from one place to another were on account of "slack work or none." A larger proportion of saleswomen in this industry made changes for this reason than workers in the admittedly irregular confectionary industry. Another investigation concerning the incomes and expenses of 500 Boston working women was made by Miss Louise Bosworth in 1907-9. The saleswomen considered had nominally an average yearly income of $382.92. But their loss from slack work and unemployment — almost en-

tirely from the latter — caused them a loss of 8 per cent., bringing their average yearly income down to $356.

Lastly we must keep in mind the facts previously given as to the varying numbers employed at different parts of the year. Almost a quarter of the saleswomen in New York State, outside the city and over a third in New York City alone, could not possibly keep one place all the year round, however much they wished to. It is not denied that personal reasons are an important factor in causing a large proportion of the changes, but the industry itself cannot evade entire responsibility for this demoralizing drift, so fatal to steadiness and efficiency. Retail trade must stand convicted, then, as one more occupation which has a share in creating a casual labor force, with all the attendant evils to the human beings that compose it.

Special Problems

A special problem in connection with most retail stores is presented by the development of a separate department for making up clothing for customers or altering ready-made garments. These "alteration hands" sell no goods and their work is practically dress-making. It is not surprising therefore, that they should suffer from irregularity of employment as dressmakers do. They are very busy three months in the spring and three months in the fall. For the time between there is almost nothing to do, and the great majority of these women are discharged or forced to take unpaid vacations or hunt for other work for several months. Such was the state of affairs found in Massachusetts and Connecticut, by state investigating commissions in 1911 and 1913 and in Baltimore through an investigation made by Miss Butler in 1909, where one-third of the stores discharged all such workers at the beginning of the dull season.

Another special problem connected with irregularity of employment in retail stores is that of the "special" who works during the rush hours of the day, or in the evening, or on the heavy days of the week. How large a proportion of the whole selling force they form is uncertain, but their use is undoubtedly increasing. Estimates have been made of 8 per cent. in Boston, 4 per cent. in Baltimore, and 6 per cent. in Kansas City. Naturally since these women work only a part of the time they are paid

only part time wages. Theoretically, students, married women, or others whose chief duties are elsewhere, get a chance in this way to earn a little extra money, but there seems to be a good deal of danger that needy workers who cannot get anything else will depend on these positions for their entire income. Nor is it clear how this can be avoided.

A third important point to be remembered in connection with retail stores is that there is even less chance in stores than in other lines that "overtime will make up for undertime" — or unemployment in this instance. "There is more after hour work in stores than the public is aware of" says the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards. There are the long hours before Christmas, for instance, and moreover, practically all the caring for stock must be done after selling hours. Such overtime is almost never paid for. Some stores give "supper money"— 35 cents is a typical amount — when girls are kept after seven o'clock in the evening. Sometimes a bonus is paid on sales during December when the hours are longest, but that is all. So the girl in the store who works through the Christmas rush and is then discharged, seldom has the slight chance of her sister in the factory to make a little extra to help her through the dull season. The great decrease in numbers also, found everywhere in mid-winter and during the summer, gives a girl discharged by one store very slight opportunity to find work in another or in some different occupation, since these are the slack times for almost all "women employing" trades.

Summary

We must, then, add retail stores to the long list of industries where the workers suffer from seasonal variations in employment. It is not those few women who succeed in keeping their places all year who suffer materially from unemployment or short time work with reduced wages, but once more we find present in large numbers the casual worker for whom the industry does not provide a place all the year round. How many of such workers there are is uncertain. According to the New York City figures they mount up to two-fifths of the whole number employed. Certainly there are enough of them to form a serious problem in establishing a real living wage.

LAUNDRIES

General Statistics

Like so many other one-time household activities, much of the washing of clothes has gone outside the home into large establishments with the factory characteristics of machinery and extensive division of labor. According to the latest census of manufactures in 1909, laundries gave employment to an average number of 77,330 women wage earners over 16 in the United States — 70.6 per cent. of the whole number of wage earners engaged in this trade. Since this is the first time figures for this industry were collected, no comparisons with previous census periods can be made, but undoubtedly the industry is a growing one. Steam laundries are well scattered throughout the country, furnishing employment to the largest numbers, naturally, in the states having large percentages of urban population.

Seasonal Variations

The question whether any great amount of involuntary irregularity of employment exists in laundries and whether earnings are greatly reduced by industrial causes cannot, it must be acknowledged, be answered with any degree of certainty from any reliable information at present available.

A steam laundry is kept open throughout the entire year and there is but slight variation in the numbers employed by months through the year. In the whole United States there was about a 10 per cent. increase in the number of laundry workers during the months of July, August and September, 1909, when more wash-clothing is in use, while the smallest numbers are employed in January and February. In the larger establishments in urban centers where much linen is washed for hotels, steamships and Pullman cars, the work is very steady from season to season.

In such laundries hours vary from day to day according to the receipts of work to be done; an unusual number of visitors in

town, a convention, the arrival of several steamships will cause the working of overtime, while in any kind of steam laundry hours are likely to be irregular from day to day over a weekly period. The average laundry employee begins late on Monday morning, because the work cannot be collected and sorted before that time. She is likely to work till late Friday evening and not at all or only a few hours on Saturday since the custom is to get each week's work out of the way by Saturday night. For the same reason overtime is almost always worked the evening before a holiday. The weekly total of hours is not likely to be high but there are one or two long days every week.

Statistics of Irregular Employment

Steady workers in laundries undoubtedly suffer very little from the lack of employment. The Massachusetts Commission of 1911 questioned on this point 593 workers remaining the whole year with the same firm and 1,049 "part of the year workers" who stayed in the same place an average period of 36 weeks. Of the former only 1.5 per cent. lost time from "enforced idleness," being out but 4 days each, on the average, from this cause. Only 1.8 per cent. of the latter lost time in this way, though these few lost a considerable amount, an average of 30.6 days each or 14.1 per cent. of their whole period of employment. It is the same state of affairs as was found among the "steady" group of salesgirls. The same investigation compares the average weekly earnings of 539 "annual workers" for the weeks they had work with 1/52 of their annual earnings. The difference between the two is very small, only 18 cents a week, amounting to 2½ per cent. of their annual earnings. Absence for personal reasons might readily account for all of this. In candy factories for instance the weekly loss computed on the same basis, was 10 per cent.

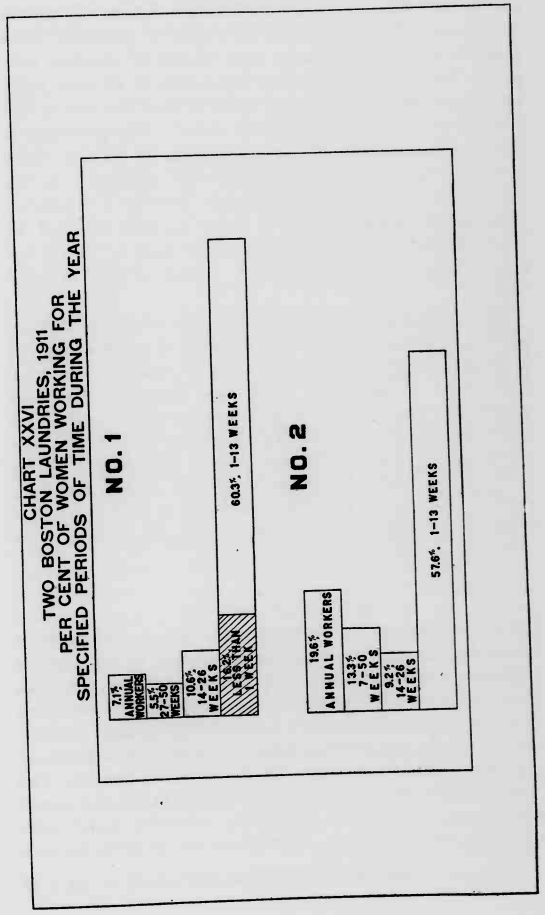
Shifting

But it is a very small portion of the women in laundries who are such steady workers. For the most part the labor force is of a particularly shifting character.

The testimony of employers before the Washington Minimum Wage Commission in 1913 makes this very clear. The proprietor

of a laundry in Tacoma said "60 to 90 days eliminates a crew completely. Some of the girls work but a few days." Another from Spokane admitted that "75 per cent. of the women coming to his plant did not stick." A third said that he developed one competent laundress out of every ten who start in. On the other side of the continent, in Massachusetts, the same conditions prevail. In 1911 the Commission on Minimum Wage Boards found that in one laundry, 57 per cent. of the workers remained less than three months. In another 76 per cent. had left by the end of that time (see Chart XXVI). Only 19 per cent. in the former and 7 per cent. in the latter were permanent "annual" workers. In 1914 the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission again studied the length of time that nearly 3,000 women workers had stayed in the same establishment. Not quite one-half remained four months or less. There were however great differences between the 36 laundries studied. In two laundries, 30 per cent. of the women kept their places the whole year while in four others only 2 per cent. did so. Between the various occupations the differences are likewise marked. Workers are least permanent in the least skilled, lowest paid lines of work. For instance, a woman is likely to become "shaker" when she first enters a laundry. All day long she shakes out the wet linen which has been packed into solid masses by the whirl of the washing machines. Only 3 per cent. of these workers remained the whole year, whereas 22 per cent. of the hand washers did so, and 23 per cent. of the "bosom pressers," who iron the bosoms of men's stiff shirts, an operation requiring much skill. Now the question is, what is the cause of this flux of workers? Is it the nature of the work, exhausting yet little skilled, carried on mostly in the midst of heat and steam and for low wages? Or is some portion of the shifting due to slack work and therefore involuntary on the part of the workers? It is difficult to answer these questions with the information thus far available about the industry. The Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, which has made the most recent and most searching investigation of the laundry industry, says that "the material which could be obtained * * * was not a matter of record and appeared highly unreliable."

Evidence as to the partial responsibility of the industry for



this flux of workers was found by the Massachusetts Commission on Minimum Wage Boards in 1911 when it questioned 1,045 women laundry workers, as to their reasons for changing positions. Twenty-one per cent. had always been in the same place, but 21 per cent. of the changes made by those who had shifted were on account of "slack work or none." This percentage is just about as large as the proportion changing for the same reason in the admittedly irregular confectionery industry. On the other hand, in Milwaukee, in the years 1911–12, a federal investigation of women workers in power laundries disclosed the fact that "the fluctuations of trade do not cause an average loss of more than one month in twelve."[1] This is not great as industries go.

The strongest proof of the personal causes behind the shifting, however, is found in this same 1914 report of the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission on wages of women in laundries. They found the percentage of the total number of employees studied who were out of work each week during the year. This percentage varied very little throughout the whole period, and showed therefore nearly the same number entering and leaving positions each week. Hence the Commission, believes that "industrial causes proper play but a small part in the fluctuation of employment" and, weighing all the evidence, this seems to be the only conclusion to draw as to the situation.

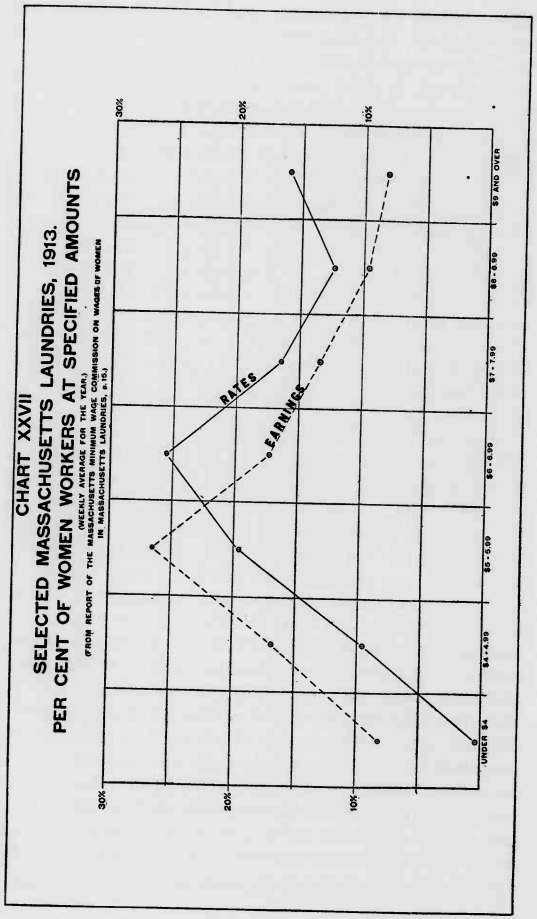
Variation in Earnings

There appears to be, therefore, little forced unemployment among laundry workers, only slight variation in the numbers employed at different seasons, and but little closing for entire days. Morever, most laundry workers are paid a flat rate often with overtime pay for the extra hours of the long day. It might then be thought that weekly earnings would equal weekly rates of pay, or even rise above them. But this is seldom the case. The 1914 investigation of the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission showed that as in so many other industries, weekly rates rose above weekly earnings. Twenty-nine and six tenths per cent.

[1] Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 122, p. 79.

of the 3,000 women employees covered by the investigation were scheduled at less than $6 a week. In reality over half, 51.5 per cent. received less than that sum. In addition only half as many really received the larger weekly earnings as were rated at these sums; 16 per cent. had weekly rates of $9 and over, but only 8.2 per cent. actually averaged this amount. (See Chart XXVII.) Short time and not entire days' or weeks' absence is the cause of most of this discrepancy between rates and earnings according to a table correlating average weekly hours and earnings in this same investigation. There is, therefore, a considerable amount of short-time and this holds true not only in Massachusetts but in other localities as well. In Washington, 19.4 per cent. of the laundry workers studied by the Industrial Welfare Commission worked 40 hours or less weekly, and 19.3 per cent. worked less than 5 days a week. In Massachusetts in the seven laundries where records of weekly hours were kept, 9.1 per cent. of the women worked less than 40 hours a week and 14.4 per cent. more worked less than 46 hours.

Short time exists, then, in laundries just as in so many other industries and time wages fall off as do the hours worked. Women in laundries, like so many other workers are paid almost "by the minute." The earlier Massachusetts investigation, in 1911, noted a "tendency to pay the worker only for the hours during which she was employed," thus "paring down the labor cost at the expense of labor." This meant only small losses day by day, a half hour here and an hour there. But such small intervals cannot be made up with other work and the loss runs up to a considerable sum in the course of a year. On the other hand many employers insist that most of the short time is due to the personal preference of the employees. The later 1914 Massachusetts investigation finds this difference of opinion and is obliged to leave the point open. "What amount of this loss" (in earnings compared with rates) "is due to compulsory short time and what to the preference of the employee is a matter about which the Commission was not furnished material with which to form an impartial judgment." But one thing is certain, rates and earnings are far from identical. A minimum wage rate would not mean an adequate income to many laundry workers.



Summary

Except in the larger and more modern establishments, much of the work in laundries is extremely disagreeable, carried on in rooms filled with heat, steam and moisture, and under conditions involving considerable physical exertion for extended periods of time — all of which is apt to cause the more inexperienced worker great fatigue or even illness. Wages, except for the older, steady workers are low. It can scarcely be a matter of surprise therefore that the amount of shifting in laundries is very great, although fairly steady employment seems to be offered. This situation presents a peculiar problem for minimum wage boards. If it is the intention really to provide a living wage, should not a higher rate be allowed for this industry where the physical exposure of the worker is so much greater? Any employer who objects to this higher rate has, of course, the option of bettering the conditions of work by removing the causes of excessive physical strain and unhealthful conditions. In this way he will take away the objections of many employees to his work and will secure for himself a more steady and reliable set of workers.

CANNING AND PRESERVING

The canning of fruits, vegetables, and fish is a prosperous and growing industry in the United States. Few industries exhibit a greater seasonal variation in the numbers employed month by month during the year. According to the latest United States Census of Manufactures taken in 1909, the maximum number of wage earners, 154,800, was employed on September 15th. The minimum number, 19,998, employed on January 15th was only 12.9 per cent. of the maximum number. Moreover, very nearly half of the whole number of wage earners were women sixteen and over. The number of women at work on a "representative day" in 1909 was 77,593, 49.8 per cent. of the whole number of wage earners. The industry is, therefore, one characterized by extreme seasonal variation and providing employment for large numbers of women workers for short periods of time.

Two types of canneries must be distinguished. One is generally found in large cities. It uses not only a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables drawn from a considerable territory, but also it may prepare baked beans, pickles, various ketchups and sauces, plum puddings, and so on. In that case such an establishment may run the whole year round, though its work will be much heavier in the late summer and early fall than at other seasons. Under these conditions, the problem of irregularity is chiefly one of reducing excessive hours of overtime for the women workers during the busy season through the legal regulation of their hours of labor.

The other type of cannery is generally found in small towns or in the open country, and puts up one or a few kinds of fruit and vegetables raised nearby. It is open only a few weeks in the late summer or early fall, the period lengthening out if several different kinds of products are used. The working force may be whole families, largely foreigners, who have come out from the cities for the season; or it may be the people of the neighborhood, including many married women, school girls and children who

are not regular wage earners, or it may be any mixture of these two classes. Thus apart from the usual currents of industrial life many serious abuses may flourish, such as the work of young children, bad sanitary conditions and over-crowding and incredibly long hours with frequent night-work. It is to child labor laws, the sanitary regulation of labor camps, and laws regulating women's hours of labor that we must look for the correction of these evils.

The adjustment of a minimum wage rate in such canning factories should require, therefore, not so much an allowance for the reduction in earnings from short time and unemployment, but a consideration of a fair wage level for an industry that runs only a part of the year, during which time a certain number of hours' work may reasonably be expected. In Australia, similar work is thought of as an "expedition" and the wage is calculated on the basis of a fair return for unskilled labor for the trip as a whole, making allowance for "the short periods of employment, the expenditure of money and of time in getting to the work, the broken time of the employees, the fact that they are paid by the hours of actual work."[1] These conditions are identical with the conditions of employment in this second type of cannery in the United States, where the problem has not been taken up. Yet in New York where these "country canneries" are of great importance, it would be an important and difficult question for any Minimum Wage Board.

[1] Reports of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court of Australia, Vol. 6, p. 61.

MISCELLANEOUS

The industries already described by no means exhaust the list of those in which women workers suffer from irregular employment. So little attention has been paid to the special problem of irregular and casual labor for women in the United States that it is impossible to get hold of its entire extent. Scattering bits of evidence, however, indicate that the following industries give rise to considerable irregularity of work with the resulting loss of earnings. The list is admittedly incomplete, but may serve to emphasize further the seriousness of the problem. Separately each one is not of relatively great importance as an employer of women, but altogether in the ones for which separate figures can be obtained, over 20,000 adult women wage earners are found. This number does not include "dyeing and cleaning," "tin cans" and "leaf tobacco" treated below, since the number of wage earners is not given separately in the census for those occupational groups.

Awnings

The busy season in this industry is at most April, May, June and July. "With the first warm days, all the customers order at once."[1] In Pittsburgh in 1907 it was found that during the rest of the year only a quarter or half of the force was kept on hand. The same state of affairs existed in Kansas City in 1912–13, according to the Board of Public Welfare. In Massachusetts in 1912, also, work was only good for these same four months. According to the Statistics of Manufacture for that year, the largest number were employed in June, nearly as many in April, May, and July, and only 55 per cent. to 65 per cent. of the maximum during the rest of the year. Evidently a large proportion of these women must get their living through some other sort of work for eight months a year or remain unemployed. Nor do steady workers entirely escape these effects of seasonal irregularity. The Massachusetts establishments were entirely

[1] "Women and the Trades," by Elizabeth B. Butler, p. 151.

closed an average of thirty working days during 1912, therefore reducing the time and earnings of the steady workers 10 per cent. in this way alone.

Buttons

Probably on account of its connection with the various garment trades the manufacture of buttons fluctuates as do the garment trades in regard to the number of women employed. There is a slight rise of numbers in the spring, a very low drop during the summer, the climb to the highest point in the late fall, and a decline after Christmas. In Massachusetts only 80 per cent. of the women in 1912 could keep their places the year round. In New Jersey the manufacture of pearl buttons, which is not especially seasonal, is classified separately from that of metal buttons. In the latter in 1912 there were places for only 55 per cent. of the women employees for the entire twelve months, while curiously enough, the number of men employees, who compose about half of all wage earners, varied but little at different parts of the year. In New York City in 1913, the State Factory Investigating Commission found that in the manufacture of covered and celluloid buttons, four large establishments employed a maximum of 360 and a minimum of 178 workers or only 49.8 per cent. of the largest number. The Commission states that while the best workers have almost continuous employment, the average button-maker works only six or eight months a year.

The steady workers, too, lost considerable time during the year, since in 1912, in both Massachusetts and New Jersey, the factories even according to the inadequate figures on "average number of days in operation yearly" were entirely closed two weeks out of the year. Undoubtedly in addition to this loss they suffered from short time and an additional reduction in earnings, for these conditions have been found to go together wherever more extended investigations have been made. Such a situation is indicated by the fact that in New York City in 1913, the State Factory Investigating Commission found that half the women workers were rated at $7.50 or more weekly, but that in the

selected week in which their wages were studied, over half received less than $7.

In addition, the figures available show fluctuations in the industry from year to year, probably due to the greater or lesser use of buttons as dress trimmings. In 1910 in Massachusetts there was considerably more irregularity than in 1912, since in the former year the minimum number of women employees was only 60 per cent. of the largest number, instead of the 80 per cent. of the latter year, and the establishments were closed an average of 49 working days during 1910, which meant a loss of no less than eight weeks to the steady workers. In New Jersey in the same year, the average length of time entirely lost by each establishment was nearly four weeks. The number of women employees remained comparatively even during the year, but the largest number was about the same as the smallest number in 1912, indicating a stagnant condition in the industry at that time.

Brushes

In Massachusetts in 1913, perhaps on account of the competition of prison labor, the State Minimum Wage Commission found brush making to be a "stagnant trade" in which short time weekly was the rule. Out of 489 workers for whom data as to average weekly hours were available, 27.1 per cent. worked an average of less than 42 hours weekly, and 54.8 per cent.— over half — worked less than 46 hours weekly. Only 13 women worked 50 hours a week or more. Though some of the manufacturers claimed that this working of short time and consequent reduction of wages was voluntary on the part of the employees, since this condition existed among time workers as well as among piece workers, the Commission felt that it indicated lack of work.

The Commission found, however, that no great seasonal variations existed. Nearly the same number of the steady workers were unemployed each week in the year, except for short periods in June and August, and the Commission thought that the increased number of absences in these times might easily be accounted for by vacations. In Pittsburgh, on the contrary, in 1907, marked seasonal irregularity in the trade was discovered.[1] No obvious reason appears why brushes are not just as much needed at one season as at another, yet in Pittsburgh there was a markedly busy season with overtime from April to August and a very slack period from August through the fall.

Dyeing and Cleaning

In Pittsburgh in dyeing and cleaning shops it was discovered[2] that overtime work occurred three to five nights weekly from March to May. Then during the summer when well to do people are out of town and more wash clothes are worn, there was a slack season during which the majority of the women employees were dismissed.

Glass

The majority of the women in glass factories are employed in the decorating, finishing and packing departments of plants that manufacture fancy glassware. A federal investigation[3] made in 1907–8, states that a third (31 per cent.) of all the women wage earners worked overtime during the fall months of the year investigated. They worked one, two or three hours several evenings a week, the time mounting up to an average of thirteen working days for each one doing this overtime work. Then in the summer almost every factory was shut down through July and August. In this way all the women would have their annual wages reduced by a sixth while only a third had a chance to gain anything by overtime. This fact in itself tends to discredit the wage-rate as a measurement of earnings for the 80 per cent. who are time workers. Other figures emphasize the same fact. First a "normal week" was selected and the number of days worked by each woman in the finishing department was found. Half did not work full time. Then their computed weekly full-time earnings and actual earnings were compared; 8 per cent. were supposed to earn less than $4 a week, but in reality 33 per cent. actually received that sum. In each wage group above $4, fewer women were found than were nominally at that rate.

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1 "Women and the Trades," by Elizabeth B. Butler, p. 255.
2 Ibid, p. 205.
3 Woman and Child Wage Earners, Vol. III.

TABLE 14
GLASS — SELECTED FACTORIES, 1907–8
(From Woman and Child Wage Earners, Vol. III, pp. 404 and 405)
A. Numbers and Percentages Working Different Numbers of Days Weekly in a "Normal Week"— Women 16 and Over

Days Worked	Number	Per cent.
Full time, 6 days	1,386	50.0
5–6 days	627	22.6
4–5 days	358	12.9
3–4 days	239	8.6
Less than 3 days	164	5.9
Total	2,774	100.0

B. Full Time and Actual Weekly Earnings in a "Normal Week"— All Females

		Under $2	$2–$2.99	$3–3.99	$4–4.99	$5–5.99	$6–6.99	$7–7.99	$8–8.99	$9–9.99	$10–11.99	$12–13.99	$14– and over	Total
Number earning given amounts	Computed full time earnings	.....	1	228	852	693	559	196	96	76	42	20	11	2,774
	Actual earnings	120	218	462	767	545	346	144	66	54	32	14	6	2,774
Per cent. earning given amounts.	Computed full time earnings	.....	(1)	8.2	30.7	25.0	20.2	7.1	3.5	2.7	1.5	0.7	0.4	100.0
	Actual earnings	4.3	7.9	16.7	27.6	19.6	12.5	5.2	2.4	1.6	1.2	0.5	0.2	100.0

[1] Less than 1/10 of 1%.

Paint

A few women are employed, not in the making of paint itself, but in labeling cans. It is low grade, totally unskilled work and the employees are of a shifting character. They are busy through February, March and April, and again in September and October. Between times "half the force is dismissed when the spring and fall seasons of house repairing are over."[1]

Paper Bags

In Kansas City it was reported by the Board of Public Welfare in 1912 that while the factories making paper bags are busy during the summer and fall, work is slack for the first five months of the year. The number of women was decreased by a fifth during this dull season, and those left at work had their earnings reduced on account of short time.

Tanneries

The women who work in tanneries suffer from both short time and lack of work. In Massachusetts, during the first seven months of 1912 their numbers were a quarter less than in the latter part

[1] "Women and the Trades," by Elizabeth B. Butler, p. 268.

of the year. An investigation of women workers in Milwaukee tanneries in 1908,[1] showed that for them "undertime was the great factor in reducing wages." For example, in one factory 68 women were employed during one fortnightly pay period, but only 16 of them worked full time and their average working hours were 119 instead of 130. The amount of work done in the two weeks would have provided 63 instead of 68 women with full-time employment. Again 66 girls were at work through a ten-day pay-period. Only 17 worked full time, and their average actual working hours for the ten days were 88. The full time hours were 100. Fifty-nine women, all on full time, could have done the work. A multitude of similar cases established the general conclusion.

Tin Cans

The manufacture of tin cans resembles that of paper boxes in that the cans are of little value in proportion to their bulk and are difficult to store. They are therefore usually made just as orders come in. Plants doing a general business are thus fairly steady, but those working for any seasonal industry are themselves highly seasonal. An example of the latter is one plant in a state prominent in fruit and vegetable canning which works for a canning factory.[2] Statistics show that for this establishment, from the middle of April till after the end of September, a force of 1,200 men, women and children are hard at work, often with overtime. Then the business drops down to practically nothing, and all the workers except perhaps 100 are discharged.

Tobacco

Most work connected with the manufacture of tobacco is fairly steady. But in one line, the preparation of leaf tobacco for cigar manufacturers in warehouse factories in the South "the work begins in January and lasts for only about four months."[3] Thus the women employed, (whose number cannot be determined since in all the statistics this process is included with others) must find work somewhere else during the greater part of the year.

[1] "Women Workers in Milwaukee Tanneries," by Irene Osgood, p. 1059. Part VII of the Report of the Wisconsin Bureau of Labor & Industrial Statistics, 1907–8.

[2] Woman and Child Wage Earners, Vol. XVIII, p. 57.

[3] Ibid, p. 308.

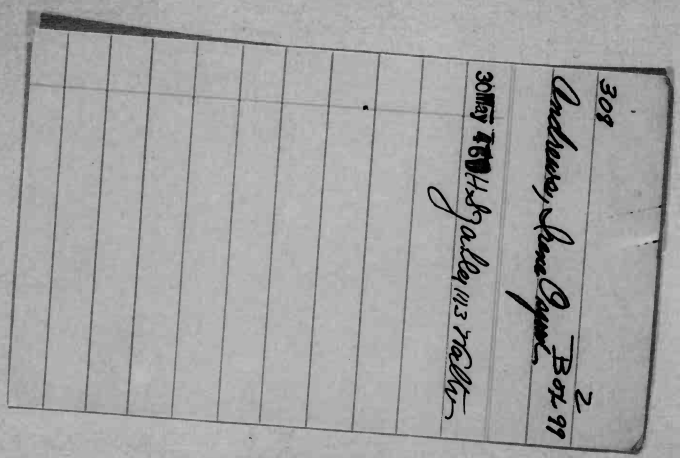
III. MINIMUM WAGE AWARDS IN THE UNITED STATES UP TO JANUARY 1, 1915

(Apply only to females unless otherwise stated)

State	Part of state covered	Goes into effect	Kinds of work covered	Workers affected: Class	Workers affected: Age	Wage rates	Legal hours per day or week	Computed rate per hour	Remarks
Massachusetts	All	Aug. 15, 1914	Brush industry	"Experienced time workers"	Any	15½ cents an hour	10 daily, 54 weekly		Piece rates also to yield at least 15½¢ an hour
	All	Aug. 15, 1914	Brush industry	"Learners and apprentices"—time workers	Any		10 daily, 54 weekly	65% of above (=about 10c)	Term of apprenticeship not more than one year
Minnesota	First-class cities	Nov. 22, 1914	Mercantile, office, waitress, hair-dressing occupations	"Women and minors of ordinary ability, except learners or apprentices"	Any	$9.00 weekly	10 daily, 58 weekly	About 15½c	
	Second, third and fourth-class cities	Nov. 22, 1914	Same as above	Same as above	Any	$8.50 weekly	10 daily, 58 weekly	About 14⅔c	
	Outside of first, second, third and fourth-class cities	Nov. 22, 1914	Same as above	Same as above	Any	$8.00 weekly	10 daily, 58 weekly	About 13⅞c	
	First-class cities	Nov. 22, 1914	Manufacturing, mechanical, telephone, telegraph, laundry, dyeing, dry cleaning, lunch-room, restaurant, or hotel occupations	Same as above	Any	$8.75 weekly	9 daily, 54 weekly	About 16⅛c	
	Second, third and fourth-class cities	Nov. 22, 1914	Same as above	Same as above	Any	$8.25 weekly	9 daily, 54 weekly	About 15⅓c	
	Outside of first, second, third and fourth-class cities	Nov. 22, 1914	Same as above	Same as above	Any	$8.00 weekly	9 daily, 54 weekly	About 14⅞c	
Oregon	All	Oct. 4, 1913	Manufacturing and mercantile establishments, millinery, dress-making, hair-dressing shops, laundries, hotels or restaurants, telephone or telegraph establishments, offices.	All except apprentices and learners	16–18	$1.00 a day	50 weekly, 8½ daily (longer hours by special permission of commission if such girls are working with adults and the shorter hours would cause the girls' dismissal)	12c	Oregon law says rates may be set. (General Laws, 1913, C. 62, section 8)
	Portland	Nov. 10, 1913	Manufacturing	"Experienced, adult women," paid by time rates	Over 18	$8.64 weekly	54 weekly, 9 daily	16c	
	Portland	Nov. 23, 1913	Mercantile establishments	"Experienced adult women"	Over 18	$9.25 weekly	50 weekly, 8½ daily	18½c	
	Portland	Feb. 2, 1914	Office work	"Experienced adult women"	Over 18	$40 a month	51 weekly, 8½ daily		
	All	Feb. 7, 1914	"Any industry"	"Experienced adult women" paid by time rates	Over 18	$8.25 weekly	54 weekly	15⅓c	
	All	Feb. 7, 1914	"Any industry"	"Inexperienced adult women" employed by time rates	Over 18	$6 weekly	54 weekly	11⅛c	To be considered "inexperienced" not more than one year
Utah	All	May 13, 1913	All	All	Under 18	75c a day	54 weekly, 9 daily	8⅓c	
Rates set by C. 65, Laws of 1913	All	May 13, 1913	All	"Apprentices"	Over 18	90c a day	54 weekly, 9 daily	10c	Not to be "apprentices" more than a year
	All	May 13, 1913	All	"Experienced" workers	Over 18	$1.25 a day	54 weekly, 9 daily	14c	
Washington	All	April 28, 1914	Mercantile establishments	"Apprentices"	Over 18	$6 a week for 1st 6 months. $7.50 a week for 2d 6 months	8 hours daily	12½c 15⅝c	Commission to issue licenses for apprentices on application of apprentices themselves, good for not more than one year. Not more than 17 per cent. of all adult female employees may be "apprentices." Not more than half the "apprentices" may be paid less than $7.50

III. MINIMUM WAGE AWARDS IN THE UNITED STATES UP TO JANUARY 1, 1915 — (*Concluded*)
(Apply only to females unless otherwise stated)

State	Part of state covered	Goes into effect	Kinds of work covered	Workers affected: Class	Workers affected: Age	Wage rates	Legal hours per day or week	Computed rate per hour	Remarks
Washington	All	June 27, 1914	Mercantile establishments	All	Over 18	$10 a week	8 hours daily	20⅚c	
	All	June 27, 1914	Mercantile establishments	"Persons of either sex"	Under 18	$6 a week	8 hours daily, females. Hours of males not limited	12½c	
	All	July 1, 1914	"Such class of occupation or employment as requires to be learned by apprentices"	"Apprentices"	Any	Wages below minimum to be fixed by commission based on previous experience of applicant and particular occupation	8 hours daily		Commission to issue a special license to each such applicant employee
	All	Aug. 1, 1914	"Any factory establishment"	All	Over 18	$8.90 a week	8 hours per day	18½c	
	All	Aug. 1, 1914	"Any factory establishment"	"Persons of either sex"	Under 18	$6 a week	8 hours daily, females. Hours of males not limited	12½c	
	All	Aug. 24, 1914	Laundries and dye works	All	Over 18	$9 a week	8 hours daily	18¾c	
	All	Aug. 24, 1914	Laundries and dye works	"Person of either sex"	Under 18	$6 a week	8 hours daily, females. Hours of males not limited	12½c	
	All	Sept. 7, 1914	Telephone and telegraph establishments	All	Over 18	$9 a week	8 hours daily	18¾c	
	All	Sept. 7, 1914	Telephone and telegraph establishments	"Persons of either sex"	Under 18	$6 a week	8 hours daily, females. Hours of males not limited	12½c	
	All	Feb. 20, 1915	Stenographer, bookkeeper, typist, billing clerk, filing clerk, cashier, checker, invoicer or any clerical work of any kind in any establishment whatsoever	"Any female"	Over 18..	$10 per week	8 hours per day	20 5-6c	
	All	Feb. 20, 1915	As above	"Person of either sex"	16-18	$7.50 per week	8 hours per day, females. Hours of males not limited	15 5-12c	
	All	Feb. 20, 1915	As above	"Person of either sex"	Under 16	$6 per week	8 hours per day, females. Hours of males not limited	12 ½c	



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